

# Readings

## Scripture

<sup>1</sup>Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. <sup>2</sup>Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. <sup>3</sup>Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure in the last days. <sup>4</sup>Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. <sup>5</sup>You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. <sup>6</sup>You have condemned and murdered the righteous person. He does not resist you.

- James 5:1-6 (English Standard Version)

## Reflection

A new study examined the role self-expression plays in online buying decisions. The new study found that the more polarizing the product, the more likely consumers are to see it as a way to express their taste and personality, and people who are a little unsure of themselves find such products to be more desirable. Products that are more polarizing — those with more five-star and one-star reviews than the ones with a single peak in the middle — are preferred by people who have self-expression needs. For example, you may buy a car just to get around town. A Honda Civic is great for that. It's cheap. It's reliable. It's very utilitarian. But a Honda Civic doesn't say much about the driver the way a Prius or Hummer might. You don't need a Hummer to get groceries. You buy a Hummer to say something about who you are. Its polarizing nature makes it a great vehicle for self-expression.

- S. Christian Wheeler, *Are We What We Buy?*,  
Stanford Graduate School of Business

And he said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? The sower sows the word. And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: the ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy. And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away. And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.

- Mark 4:13–20 (English Standard Version)

# Sermon Outline

## The Deceitfulness of Riches

James 5:1-6

*True Religion*

Brad Anderson

*The deceitfulness of riches can choke out the word of truth in our hearts, causing it to become unfruitful.* (James 5:1, 1:18)

### What does James ask us about this sobering dynamic?

Have you laid up heavenly treasure? (James 5:2-3)

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Have you treasured a righteous life? (James 5:4-6)

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### Reflection Questions (taken in part from the Serendipity Study Bible for Groups)

- What experience has most affected your social conscience?
- What is James saying about wealth: Is it sinful? Is it deceptive? Is it hazardous to your health? A burdensome responsibility? A certain way to heaven or a way to hell?
- Who is James addressing as "rich people": Christian business men (as in James 4:13-17)? Secular landowners? Today's multi-national corporations?
- What abuses by the rich occur in our world today? How could the church, or even your community group, use its resources to help overcome such inequity?