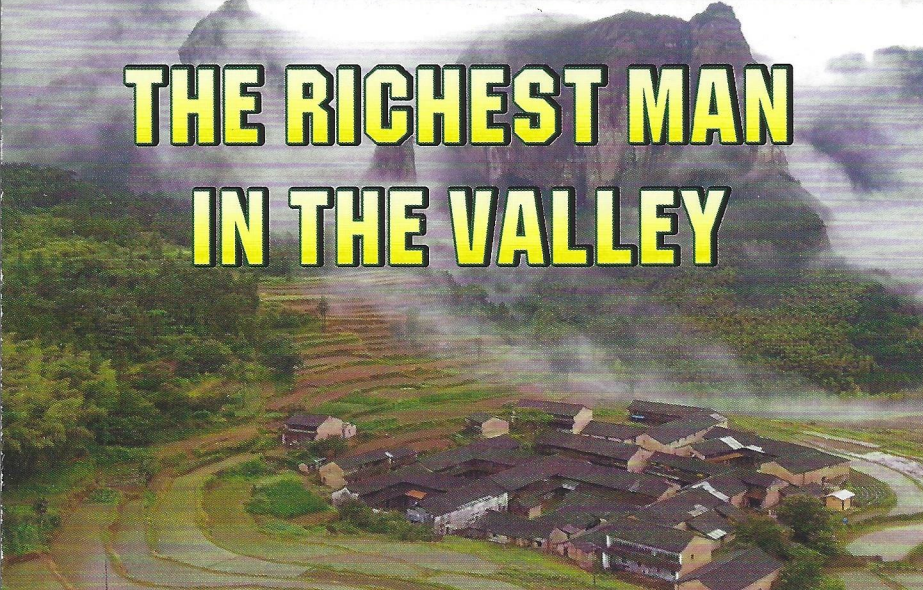


THE RICHEST MAN IN THE VALLEY



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A Norwegian farmer stood on the porch of his fine old home gazing out over his property of broad acres. Never had he feasted his eyes on scenery that appeared so beautiful to him as his own land looked on this fair summer's day. *"All this is mine!"* he exclaimed.

However, he was really poor, because, having neglected the needs of his immortal soul he was *"not rich toward GOD."* (Luke 12:21) As he stood gloating over his land, a servant appeared for him with his riding horse to attend to his estate. He jumped into the saddle and galloped happily away.

Up a lane a little distance away old Hans the farm hand, was working. Hans had just unpacked his lunch. He removed his hat, and with folded hands, was returning thanks to GOD the Giver of all good gifts when he heard his employer's voice: *"Hans, how are you today?"*

"Oh, it is you, sir?" responded the old man, looking up. *"I did not hear you coming for I have grown somewhat deaf lately and my sight is failing also."*

"But you look very happy, Hans."

"Happy? Yes indeed, I am happy! I have many reasons to be so. My Heavenly Father gives me raiment and daily bread. I have a good roof over my head, and a good bed to sleep in. That is more than My Precious Saviour had while He sojourned here below. I was just thanking GOD for all His mercies when you appeared."

The landlord glanced at Hans' meagre lunch, a few slices of bread and a piece of fried meat. *"And that is the kind of food you are thanking GOD for! I would feel quite deprived if that were all I had for dinner."*

"Would you?" asked Hans wonderingly. "But perhaps you do not know what I have that adds sweetness to everything GOD gives me. It is the inward presence of Christ my Saviour! May I tell you a dream I had last night sir?"

"Of course Hans; tell me your dream, I'd like to hear it."

"As I was falling asleep my mind was taken up with the happy land above and the many mansions prepared for those who truly love the Lord. Suddenly I felt myself transferred to the heavenly portals. They were wide open, so I could look into the blessed city. Oh sir, the glory and beauty I saw no tongue could describe! Of course it was just a dream; but there was one thing I particularly wanted to tell you."

The landlord began to look uneasy, but Hans not noticing continued: "I heard a voice saying, '**The richest man in the valley will die tonight.**' Then I awoke.

"Sir, those solemn words were spoken so plainly, I have not been able to forget them. I felt I ought to tell you. Perhaps it is a warning for you to prepare to 'GO HOME TO HEAVEN!'

The landlord's face turned pale, but he tried to hide the fears that rushed in upon him. "Nonsense!" he cried. "You may believe in dreams, but I do not. Goodbye."

He galloped away in great haste. Old Hans looking after him, prayed, "O Lord, have mercy on his soul if he is to die so soon."

A couple of hours later when the farmer arrived home, and hurrying into the parlour, he threw himself down on the sofa, quite exhausted.

"What a fool I am for letting the silly talk of an ignorant old man disturb me! The richest man in the valley. Of course

myself, but the idea of my dying tonight! I never have been so well in all my life. At least, this morning I felt fine; but right now I do have a peculiar headache, and my heart does not seem to beat normally. Perhaps I should send for the doctor."

Towards the evening the doctor came. The landlord-farmer was somewhat feverish on account of his agitation but was at a loss to explain his disability.

The doctor lingered for several hours, endeavouring to drive away the landlord's gloomy thoughts. It was nearing ten o'clock when he decided to leave when the doorbell rang.

"Who can be calling at this time of night?" the landlord said anxiously to the departing doctor.

"Sorry to disturb you sir," said the messenger "I just came in to tell you that old Hans died suddenly this evening, and so we are asking you to please make arrangements for the funeral."

So the old man's dream had come true. It was not the possessor of the broad and fertile acres, but his poor workman who was "*the richest man in the valley.*" That man's ransomed soul had gone "*up to heaven, washed in the blood of the Lamb.*"

How is it with you dear reader? Are you rich toward GOD as Hans was? Is His Saviour yours?

"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Matthew 16:26

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