“ACRES OF DIAMONDS”

– From Russell H. Conwell, “Acres of Diamonds”, a speech given over 6,000 times and first published in 1890.

Now then, I say again that the opportunity to get rich, to attain … great wealth, is here in Philadelphia now, within the reach of almost every man and woman who hears me speak to-night, and I mean just what I say… I have come to tell you what in God’s sight I believe to be the truth,… that the men and women sitting here, who found it difficult perhaps to buy a ticket to this lecture, … have within their reach “acres of diamonds,” opportunities to get largely wealthy.

I say that you ought to get rich, and it is our duty to get rich. How many of my pious brethren say to me, “Do you, a Christian minister, spend your time going up and down the country advising young people to get rich, to get money?” “Yes, of course I do.” They say, “Isn’t that awful! Why don’t you preach the gospel instead of preaching about man’s making money?” “Because to make money honestly is to preach the gospel.” That is the reason. The men who get rich may be the most honest men you find in the community. “Oh,” but says some young man here to-night, “I have been told all my life that if a person has money he is very dishonest and dishonorable and mean and contemptible.”

My friend, that is the reason why you have none, because you have that idea of people. The foundation of your faith is altogether false. Let me say here clearly, and say it briefly, though subject to discussion which I have not time for here, ninety-eight out of one hundred of the rich men of America are honest. That is why they are rich. That is why they carry on great enterprises and find plenty of people to work with them. It is because they are honest men.

Says another young man, “I hear sometimes of men that get millions of dollars dishonestly.” Yes, of course you do, and so do I. But they are so rare a thing in fact that the newspapers talk about them all the time as a matter of news until you get the idea that all the other rich men got rich dishonestly.

My friend, you take and drive me,… and introduce me to the people who own their homes around this great city, those beautiful homes with gardens and flowers, those magnificent homes so lovely in their art, and I will introduce you to the very best people in character as well as in enterprise in our city, and you know I will. A man is not really a true man until he owns his own home, and they that own their homes are made more honorable and honest and pure, true and economical and careful, by owning the home.

Money is power, and you ought to be reasonably ambitious to have it. You ought because you can do more good with it than you could without it. Money printed your Bible, money builds your churches, money sends your missionaries, and money pays your preachers, and you would not have many of them, either, if you did not pay them. I am always willing that my church should raise my salary, because the church that pays the largest salary always raises it the easiest. You never knew an exception to it in your life. The man who gets the largest salary can do the most good with the power that is furnished to him. Of course he can if his spirit be right to use it for what it is given to him.

I say, then, you ought to have money. If you can honestly attain unto riches in Philadelphia, it is our Christian and godly duty to do so. It is an awful mistake of these pious people to think you must be awfully poor in order to be pious.

Some men say, “Don’t you sympathize with the poor people?” of course I do, or else I would not have been lecturing these years. I won’t give in but what I sympathize with the poor, but the number of poor who are to be with is very small. To sympathize with a man whom God has punished for his sins, thus to help him when God would still continue a just punishment, is to do wrong, no doubt about it, and we do that more than we help those who are deserving. While we should sympathize with God’s poor-that is, those who cannot help themselves-let us remember that is not a poor person in the United States who was not made poor by his own shortcomings, or by the shortcomings of someone else. It is all wrong to be poor, anyhow. Let us give in to that argument and pass that to one side.