

The Parable of the Rich, Foolish Man

Luke 12:16-21

16, “And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: 17, And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? 18, And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. 19, And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. 20, But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? 21, So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

INTRODUCTION

- It is usually difficult to discuss money with people, regardless of whether they are **rich** or **poor**. People find it hard to see how the problem of covetousness affects their lives.
- There are more parables about money than any other subject.

What is **COVETOUSNESS**?

1. It is a real and underlying problem often not detected by those who have a problem with it.
2. It is the cause of family disputes.
3. *“It is an unquenchable thirst for getting more of something we think we need in order to be truly satisfied. It may be a thirst for money or the things money can buy, or even a thirst for position and power. However, the people I have seen who had this problem are totally oblivious to it.”*
(Warren Wiersbe)

A. THE PARABLE

Luke 12:13-14, *“And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?”*

- A man stepped out of the crowd and sought Jesus to solve his problem. He called Jesus “Rabbi”; - a respectful term for a teacher and judge among the people, called upon to settle legal matters.
- Jesus refused to get involved. He recognised that both brothers had the same problem; both were greedy; both were covetous and neither would accept advice.
- Greed and covetousness is never satisfied.
- They needed to repent; to have their hearts changed.
“Like too many people today, they wanted Jesus to serve them but not to save them.” (Warren Wiersbe)
- The situation with these brothers is the Lord’s way of introducing the subject of covetousness. He masterfully uses the parable to expose the problem, hopefully causing the reader to stop and consider His purpose in talking this way.
- Jesus made it clear that true life does not depend on an abundance of possessions.
- He did not deny that we have certain basic needs.
Matthew 6:32, *“(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.”*
1 Timothy 6:17, *“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;”*
- He only affirmed that we will not make life richer by acquiring these things.
- Mark Twain once defined “civilization” as “a limitless multiplication of unnecessary necessities” and according to the world’s view, he was right. People think that Paul’s admonition in 1 Timothy 6 applies only to the “rich and famous.” We are all wealthy in this country by comparison with a lot of other nations.
- Jesus introduces the foolish rich man in this context, warning all to beware of covetousness.

B. THE SCOPE OF THIS PARABLE

- Is vast.
- It applies to all men, women and children, rich or poor. All must deal in their lifetime with this sin of covetousness.
- The ten commandments make it clear in Exodus 20:17 “THOU SHALT NOT COVET”
 - Thy neighbour’s house
 - His wife
 - His manservant (employee)
 - His maidservant (female employee)
 - His ox or his ass (car, truck, tractor, machinery, or his animals)
 - Nor anything that is thy neighbour’s

THIS IS A UNIVERSAL COMMAND TO ALL!

- Jesus takes time to explain the complexity of how the material can dampen spirituality or even render a man spiritually paralysed. Jesus shows the link between the material and the spiritual. Desire for more things provides a substitute to take away any thirst or hunger for **truth**. An obsession for the material leaves little to no room for Jesus.
- The rich man was full of himself; Eleven times he said, “I WILL”. He completely forgot the creator who gave the abundance.

C. THE CONTEXT OF THE PARABLE

What comes before and after the text of Luke 12:16-21 puts this teaching in a clearer light.

1. The two covetous brothers who thought only of their individual situation.
2. After the twelve anxious disciples who worried over having too little. The teaching of the parable falls between these two thoughts.

D. THE MEANING AND MISSION OF THIS PARABLE

There are no hidden messages, just a simple revelation of the reality of covetousness and how dangerous it is. It is possible to be obsessed with things and go headlong into hell.

1. God, The Father, had blessed Israel and given them covenant blessings of a land flowing with milk and honey. Sadly, they took the blessings for granted and disregarded God. They rejected Jesus Christ and were totally unprepared for eternity.

V21 *“So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”* They were not rich toward God; were spiritually bankrupt and facing a Christless eternity in hell.

V22 *“And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on.”* God regarded Israel as fools. How sad when you think of the glorious past!

2. Beware of covetousness v15, *“And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.”*

3. The situation which the Lord described
 - a. A plentiful harvest – anxiety – what can I do to keep it all for myself? What a covetous attitude – no one is going to get any of it if I lock it up in my NEW BARN!
 - b. V17, *“And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?”* What shall I do; no thought of anyone else – neither God nor man.
 - c. V18, *“And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.”* Demolition of small barns and building of new barns with no thought of future life needs.
 - d. All are apt to die;- some young and some old! The Lord’s will is not considered, even in life expectancy. He is a fool who fails to take these matters into consideration.
 - e. There are two alternatives in the long term; Heaven or Hell.
 - f. One’s life can be cut off without warning. Readiness is essential.
-Obsessed with his barns, he falls headlong into hell before the night is spent!
 - g. His plan for his future is settled in his own mind, not “if the Lord wills.” Presumption on tomorrow is foolish.
James 4:13-17, *“Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil. Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.”*

Health and life guarantees no man his future. Insurance, super, sales, good prices and preservation of the harvest are all uncertain.

Do not trust in uncertain riches!

James 5:1-3, *“Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.”*

Matthew 6:19, *“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:”* to say nothing of vermin, bugs, disease, mold, theft, fire, flood, storm or tornado!! Only a fool says in his heart that there is no God and that tomorrow is all mine.

h. V19 *“And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.”*

Covetousness brings false claims of pleasure (take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry!) What a short-sighted plan for self-indulgence!

Not a thought is given to:

- Giving – a thank offering for the Lord!
- Helping those in need
- A responsible attitude toward family and others
- Wise investment
- Getting rid of “THINGS”

What a graphic picture of modern society!

E. THE APPLICATION OF THE PARABLE

WARNING: All will come to an end. Judgement and hell await those who fail to accept Christ.

Jesus’ warning is clear. V20, *“But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?”*

The man’s neglect of God and his total disregard for God did not change the reality! His time was up. There is a time to be born and a time to die. There is no time to pack a bag and you can’t take anything with you.

- The **SOUL**

Man is spirit, soul and body.

- For the believer, to be absent from the body means Heaven.

- But for the rich fool – Hell. Hell and eternal loss is so real – this man lost all for he had no relationship with God, no rewards waiting, no mansion prepared.

- **BELIEVER: STOP AND THINK**

“Only one life, so soon it will pass, only what’s done for Christ will last”

What’s in your will?

What things do you covet?

V21, “*So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.*”

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE RICH TOWARD GOD?

- It means to acknowledge gratefully that everything we have comes from God, and then to make an effort to use what He gives for the good of others and the glory of God. Wealth can be enjoyed and employed at the same time if our purpose is to honour God.

1 Timothy 6:10-11, “*For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.*”

Luke 12:22-24, “*And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment. Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls?”*

- It is good for us to read the Lord’s instructions to his poor disciples who, like some of us, are anxious as to how we will make ends meet!

Remember, the rich man experienced anxiety at his abundance!

- Consider God’s provisions and promises.

Philippians 4:19, “*But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*”

- Lay up treasure in Heaven.

Luke 12:34, “*For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*”

- Remember your eternal mansion! – being prepared by our Lord.

John 14:1-3, “*Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a*

place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”

- Repent of your sinful, covetous spirit, make sure you accept Christ as Saviour. Revelation 3:18-19, *“I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.”*

- Surrender to Christ as Lord.
Romans 12:1-2, *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”*

- Set your affection on things above
Colossians 3:1-2, *“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.”*

- Use your resources for His glory in sending forth the gospel and winning souls for Christ.
2 Corinthians 9:6-9, *“But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work: (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever.”*
Matthew 6:33, *“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”*

MEMORY VERSE:

1 Timothy 6:17, *“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;”*