

The Parables of Jesus: The Rich Fool

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Date: 20 June 2021

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[0 : 00] Welcome here for this Sunday, June 20th. Today is, as Vern touched on, Father's Day. And I want to take a moment to recognize dads this morning.

If you're like me, maybe you didn't get breakfast in bed. Michelle's birthday is always the day before Father's Day, so it's all about her. And that is an absolute, she's doing jazz hands back there. So Father's Day is secondary, and that's fine. I'm good with it. I've had years of therapy to acclimatize. Maybe you have older people, older children, who don't necessarily remember to phone, don't make cards like they used to, don't burn toast, don't buy ties.

Things like that. But maybe you did. Maybe George got a drawing this morning for Machete. Maybe you got a box of chocolates or a bouquet of flowers. That's okay.

Consider yourselves lucky. But let's be honest. Let's be honest. Moms have the truly challenging job, I believe. Dads may take on the role of being more of the state of the world.

[1 : 48] Stay at home parent. Take on the role of providing more of the household income, as we did in our family, so that moms can stay home.

Or if both parents work, dads hopefully share the work around the house. I know that's mind-blowing. But share that work around the house to create balance.

To maintain harmony. It's so important. Now for me this morning, speaking from experience, being a father is one of the greatest adventures.

It's one of the greatest challenges and joys of my life. It has been and it continues to be. Particularly now, as we watch our children continue to develop into young adults with their own opinions, with their own goals and aspirations and attitudes, which aren't always mine.

And that's where therapy comes in too. And being a father, I'm going to try not to choke up here, being a father has given me a greater appreciation for my own dad, who's not around anymore.

[3 : 08] He is one of the greatest mentors and friends that I have ever had. I think I've said before that my mom maintained a parental kind of role to me, to her last day.

But my dad consciously, about when I was 18 or so, transitioned. He even verbalized it to me and said, I'm no longer your dad.

And I said, Was it something I've done? And he said, No, no. He said, I am your mentor. I'm your advisor. I'm your cheerleader.

I'm your supporter. I will advise you. I will correct you. I will encourage you. But my job as being your dad in that way is different now.

And that conscious decision is something that I'm trying to do myself. So maybe, no matter, this is speaking to fathers, ladies, I apologize.

[4 : 08] No matter where you're at in your journey of fatherhood, your experience, I hope, has been largely positive. Not a lot of fathers here in person today.

And perhaps, your experience with your own father, ladies, you can relate to this as well. Your experience with your own father was maybe positive. Was maybe a joy in your life.

That you learned from your dad. That he helped shape your character in positive ways. And that maybe you've been able to pass that along to some of your children as well.

And maybe grandchildren too, right? We recognize that generational opportunity that we have. But this morning we recognize that being a father can be hard.

As a father, I have made bad decisions. I have said things, even as recently as yesterday, that I regret. Sadly, in our world we recognize broken families.

[5 : 16] We recognize that divorce is more common than we may want to appreciate or recognize. We recognize that men can become fathers in less than ideal circumstances.

And without even having had healthy models of fatherhood themselves. That can be challenging. For others, myself included in this group, they deeply miss their fathers. Their fathers are gone. They long for one last conversation. One last shared experience. I'm looking forward to that one day.

For other men, they may reflect on, and ladies, you as well. You may reflect on a father that you never really knew or never felt close to. A father who is never perhaps there for you. And maybe you're even glad, if you had a moment to think about it, that that man is not involved in your life at all. So this morning, we recognize that Father's Day can be a time of celebration for some.

[6 : 32] But for others, it's a time of grief. It's a time of longing. Perhaps even anger or frustration for others.

And we also recognize that Father's Day can be challenging for women as well, as I've kind of touched on here. If they find themselves, if you find yourself missing your own father. Or the father of your children. Or any other challenging emotions that can come on this day. So regardless of your circumstances, may it be a time of joy and reflection, if that's your situation. And if not, may God bring you peace and comfort and healing to you in your circumstances. We have a good God, a good Father, who is our Heavenly Father. And He loves you just as you are.

[7 : 40] Happy Father's Day. Happy Father's Day.

And we explored the idea of godly wisdom together a bit back then. And you may even want to check that out on the website as a bit of a refresher to the idea of biblical wisdom. February 24th, 2019. So in the past, I've identified for us that the Bible consists of many different genres of writing.

Do you remember me saying that before? Maybe you've learned that from your own studies. I think Vern would probably tell you when he's teaching Jeremiah, when he's teaching Lamentations. He would probably, knowing him, that he would reflect on what kind of context that writing would come from. But one of these genres is called wisdom literature.

[8 : 58] And it's something you study in seminary or other areas. But the books of Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes fall into this category of wisdom literature.

And as we're continuing in our sermon series this morning, the parables of Jesus, my mother-in-law asked me the other day, how long is this series going to continue? And I said, oh, you hate it that much, do you?

And she said, no, I'm just enjoying it. I'm wondering how long it'll go. And I said, I got a ways to go, yeah. So this morning we're considering that out of more than 40 stories that Jesus told in his parables, he used all of these stories to somehow emphasize a deeper meaning or spiritual truth. These weren't just good stories, although they are very good stories. And early in this series, I highlighted for us that for some scholars, they group the parables into five main categories. And I've talked about this before. Parables of the kingdom, salvation, wisdom and folly, the Christian life, and judgment.

[10 : 11] Those are the five categories that many scholars identify. And so far, we've now explored a few parables in the category of the kingdom and some in the category of salvation.

So this morning we're moving to the next category, which is wisdom and folly. As we explore the parable of the rich fool.

This parable is found in the book of Luke, chapter 12, verses 13 to 31. Luke 12, 13 to 31.

So you can turn to it in your Bible, open your app on your phone, or just listen as I read. Someone in the crowd said to him, Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.

Jesus replied, He thought to himself, Hmm, what should I do?

[11 : 35] I have no place to store my crops. Then he said, This is what I'll do. I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones. And there I will store all my grain and my goods.

And I'll say to myself, You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy. Eat, drink, and be merry.

Do you ever wonder where that phrase comes? There it is. But God said to him, You fool. This very night your life will be demanded from you.

Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself? Jesus says, This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself, but is not rich to God.

Then Jesus said to his disciples, Therefore I tell you, Do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, or what you will wear.

[12:40] Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothes. Consider the ravens, Jesus says. They do not sow or reap.

They have no storeroom or barn. Yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable are you than birds? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?

Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest? Consider how the lilies grow, Jesus says.

They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith?

And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink. Do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things.

[13:57] And your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.

The word of the Lord. Excellent. Thank you, Florence. So for those of you who weren't here this week, we're becoming Bramard Liturgical Baptist Church.

When we read scripture, I will say, the word of the Lord. There we go. That's the response. Thanks be to God. Just to recognize that we've read scripture together.

Greed and worry. Ugh. Wanting what we don't have or what someone else has, and overthinking or being concerned over things we can't control.

Can you relate to either of those issues, or perhaps both of them? I certainly can. If you want me to overthink something, I'm happy to do that for you.

[15:08] It's as though Jesus knew exactly what it means to be human, as he told these stories, isn't it?

Wanting what we don't have. It can be so easy for us to see that, not as greed, and in many ways it's not, but maybe as ambition, or maybe setting healthy goals, perhaps.

Working to get ahead. Planning for your future. These are all familiar phrases. Not all of them are wrong. I'm not saying ambition is sin.

I'm not saying seeking to improve your circumstances is sin. It's about perspective, though. Many of you know that I love quotes.

I think by this point, all of you know that I love quotes. So can you help me finish this one? He who dies with the most toys. Louder.

[16:14] Thank you. He who dies with the most toys wins. Or I want to suggest an alternative version for us this morning. He who dies with the most toys still dies.

See, Jesus responds to the greed that he encounters in this audience. He sees it right away, and he calls it out for what it is. He calls it out for being the wrong perspective, the wrong goal, the wrong direction.

And he feels so strongly about that that he focuses his whole parable on it to call it out. Those two, that man right at the beginning says, Jesus, you pick, tell my brother, make my brother share the inheritance with me.

Jesus says, oh man, here I have to address this issue again. So he does. In this story, the rich fool likely perceives that he's doing the right thing, right?

He's storing supplies. He's planning for the future. He's looking out for himself. He's looking out for his needs. He's putting something aside for later.

[17:31] But Jesus is so clear on this. Provisions and planning can so quickly become tainted by unhealthy greed and jealousy.

Right? We saw that. I want my inheritance. I want it to be fair. But why is that? Why does that healthy idea become tainted?

Because we worry. Right? I believe that greed and worry can become so intimately connected. And Jesus suggests that's the case here.

Do you remember what I suggested, those of you who were here last week, in the sermon, I suggested that we are wanderers. Right?

We see it in the Old Testament. We see it in covenant after covenant. When God says, my people, come to me. Here's a bridge between you and me to restore relationship.

[18 : 38] Perfect, we say, humanity. And then we wander. And God says, no, come back to me. Here's another opportunity. And we say, great, thanks, Lord.

And we wander again. Right? You remember that from last week? How many times does scripture demonstrate God's faithfulness to his people, his trustworthiness to provide and protect? If we counted, we would run out of fingers and toes and every other counting tool we have. Too many times to count. How often does the Bible remind us that God will provide for our needs? That he will answer prayer according to his will. How many times? Too many times to count. God is faithful.

And yet, we wonder. We get distracted by the priorities of the world.

[19 : 46] We get distracted by the world telling us that we're in this alone. Do you hear that message from the world? Every man, woman, child, for themselves.

It's every person for themselves. The only person who will look out for me is me. That's what the world says. And then, we begin to worry.

Don't we? So, unless you're a nature buff or a gardener, I'm looking at Mark, perhaps Jesus' examples of birds and lilies here don't necessarily resonate with you.

And that's okay. Perhaps you find it difficult to grasp what he's getting at when he uses those examples. But he's using them to address the human tendency to worry.

My friends, the point here is that if God cares enough about birds and flowers, creations that we, certainly many of us, may deem to be relatively or even perhaps totally insignificant, how much more does he care about you?

[21 : 10] I would suggest the difference is infinite. even if you struggle to care about yourself or to believe that anyone cares for you, God always has and he always will.

do you know what it's like to have that kind of dependence in your life? Maybe you don't. The dependence, the trustworthiness of God, I don't think we always have an even comparison for that in our lives.

Have you been betrayed by friends, business partners, colleagues, family members?

It's hard to trust, isn't it? It's hard to trust that someone else actually cares not only about you and for you, but even more than they care about themselves.

That's how low our bar of trust is set often. I'm sure that each one of us has many stories about how God has shown up for us in the past.

[22 : 33] I have some that I've shared over the past few years here and I have others that would blow your mind. Just the ways that God has shown up for me or for our family or for someone I know against all odds, against all expectations, against any human understanding or measuring stick for trust.

God provides, God shows up. wandering away from a focus on God and His kingdom priorities. It eventually leads us to a selfish kind of disregard for what God has to say at all in our lives, doesn't it? When we wander away from that focus, when we wander away from the one who we can trust infinitely in our lives to provide, to love, to care, to protect, no wonder we worry.

My fellow wanderers, God is reminding us to trust Him. He will provide for us.

And in God's provision for us, entrusting Him as much as it seems contrary to our human logic, if we trust God to provide for our needs, it actually frees us to selflessly and unconditionally care for others.

[24 : 22] That's the kind of wisdom that's revealed in the story that we're exploring here. Are there areas of your life that you can recognize that you've made off-limits to God?

Okay, God, I'll trust you with all the less important stuff, but this, I gotta look after on my own. If I don't make sure there's enough money in the bank to pay the mortgage every month, I can't live on the street, Lord.

You understand. You can have the other stuff. Are there areas where you've actually taken control away from God and said, no, Father, not this?

Have you taken control from Him rather than releasing control? control. When we release control of things and let God have them, He can change you.

He can teach you. And dare I say, He can and will bless you when you do that, when you trust Him, when you let go.

[25 : 39] seeking the kingdom first, when Jesus uses that phrase throughout Scripture, it means yielding control to Him.

We're quite ready to say, Jesus is the Lord of my life, but can we live that? You know what lordship means?

It means He has control over everything. Do you hear that? everything. Can you give Jesus lordship over everything?

My prayer for each of us, myself included, is that we become more and more able to see our relationship with God not just as one of many worries or obligations in your life.

Do you worry about getting to church? Do you feel guilty if you don't make it here? That's not the point. It's a relationship.

[26 : 45] It's not an obligation. So come to see, seek to see, ask God to help you see your relationship with Him as a life-giving source, as something that can and will actually free you to live the kind of life that God truly wants for you to have.

My friends, I don't want you to worry. I don't want you to be burdened by guilt and self-judgment. that is not what God wants for you.

That is not His promise to you. He wants you to be free. He wants you to trust Him with everything you are and everything you have because He will not let you down.

Amen. Amen.