

Luke 12:13-21: When Greed Wins

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Preacher: Arthur Jackson

[0 : 00] The book of Luke chapter 12 verses 13 through 21 that can be found on page 847 in the Bibles in front of you. Luke chapter 12 verses 13 through 21. Please stand for the reading of God's Word.

Someone in the crowd said to him, Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.

But he said to him, Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you? And he said to them, Take care and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.

And he told them a parable saying, The land of the rich man produced plentifully. And he thought to himself, What shall I do? For I have nowhere to store my crops. And he said, I will do this.

I will tear down my barns and build larger ones. And there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years.

[1 : 09] Relax, eat, drink, be merry. But God said to him, Fool, This night your soul is required of you, And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?

So is the one who lays up treasures for himself and is not rich towards God. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Good afternoon to you.

And it's good to be in the house of the Lord with God's people on another Sunday afternoon. In view of the events of this past week, Our current stewardship series is a very timely one indeed.

Who among us has not been touched by the tremendous pain and plight of the Haitian people, Whose country has been ravished by a very, very deadly earthquake.

Our island neighbor, roughly 700 miles off the coast of Florida, Is among the poorest nations in the world, The poorest in the Western Hemisphere.

[2 : 37] Almost one-third of the population is either ill or underweight. Almost half are illiterate.

Life expectancy is a mere 52 years old. And 10% of the children die before the age of four.

Check this out. The salary of the average person in Haiti is \$70 a month.

And the GDP, the gross domestic product of the nation, Is a mere \$8 billion a year.

What's interesting about this \$8 billion figure Is how it compares with the \$90 billion That five major banking institutions in our country Are paying out in executive compensation and bonuses.

[3 : 50] The figure is nearly 12 times GDP, the gross domestic product of Haiti.

Now while by most standards, most of us here, by Haitian standards, Most of us here would be considered wealthy. And by the standards of the Wall Street banking executives, relatively speaking, Most of us here could be considered poor.

But here's the deal. Regardless of where we find ourselves on the continuum, Along the spectrum, the words of Jesus in our text today Are right for all of us.

Young or old, married or unmarried, parents or children. Why are they right? Because all of us here today, We are candidates for covetousness.

For greed. For the desire to have more, And more, And more. And that's what Jesus addresses in this text.

[5 : 11] We see it particularly in verse 15. Look at it with me. And he said to them, Take care, And be on your guard Against all covetousness.

For one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions. Why this warning?

Why this very strong warning against greed? The nature of greed is like this. The goal is always gain.

But more often than not, Greed results in the loss. Loss to us relationally.

Loss to us personally. Loss to us spiritually. Here's the deal. First thing I want to tell you, Based on this passage, Is that when greed wins, We lose relationally.

[6 : 21] When greed wins, When greed wins, When greed wins, You and I lose relationally. Greed robs us. On the relational level.

In this passage, We see an unidentified person, From the crowd, Approached our Lord about an issue, That he had with a family member.

You see that in verse 13. Someone in the crowd said to him, Teacher, Tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.

Since Jesus was an authority figure, His word could have been the very thing That would have swung things in the direction of this inquirer's favor.

People often in that day appeal to rabbis to settle legal disputes. Now, Whether the man in the text had sought legal help otherwise unsuccessfully, We don't know.

[7 : 23] We do know that there were laws in that day that dealt with inheritance. We see that in Deuteronomy chapter 21, Verses 15 and following. But here he was, He wanted the voice of authority to help him, And to help him get what he wanted.

Jesus refusing. He refused to get directly involved in the issue, But he did view this as an opportunity to address What likely was underlying the underlying factor.

Now, whether this person had received his fair share or not, We don't know. What we do know, He wanted more. Huh?

How many human dilemmas Are fueled by greed of some sort? Greed has a way of raising its ugly head In our relationships with each other, And it has a way of bringing the absolute worst out of people.

Huh? Particularly when something material Is being left behind. Some people are not on speaking terms today Because they feel that they have been wronged By other family members concerning.

[8 : 54] What was left behind. Students of scripture know The family feuding that happened between Jacob and Esau Because Jacob, by trickery, Used deceit to gain advantage over his brother.

Genesis chapter 27 through chapter 29. Ahab the king Was not content with what he had With his own property.

But he wanted the property of Naboth, his neighbor. His greed, coupled with the conniving ways of his wife Jezebel, Resulted in the murder of Naboth And his securing, or should we say, The theft of his property.

Greed has a way of seeking approval for its actions. It's not uncommon for family members to go to court Trying to get their fair share.

Judges and juries are appealed to daily for judgments. Some justifiable, but others simply because People want more.

[10 : 08] People are greedy. Why this warning? Because when greed wins, Relationships lose.

Greed can rob us of the loving relationships That we and others need. It raises its head in the home And in business and in other venues Where the desire for more And more and more Causes us to violate one another And disrespect one another Greed, friends, is socially Destructive When greed wins, we lose relationally But also, when greed wins, we lose personally We see this in verses 16 through 19 Greed has a way of robbing us At the personal level Keeping us from being all that we could be For one another, huh?

And as Jesus did here in this particular text He uses a teaching method that he often uses He states a truth or a principle Watch out for greed But then he uses a parable Or an illustration Really to drive this point home, huh?

Now here's the deal What we see in this particular man It's really sort of scary, isn't it? Because we could easily put ourselves In the place of this man Because you and I have a way Of relishing plenty And surplus And self-sufficiency Note the person in the parable He's rich We see that in verse 16 It says that there, doesn't it?

And he told them a parable The land of a rich man Produced plentifully Huh? He was successful by this world's standards He's adept at long-range planning Look at him there He thought to himself What shall I do?

[12 : 13] For I have nowhere to store my crops And he says I will do this I will tear down my barns And build greater ones And there I will store all my grain And my goods He's confident He thinks big This is the kind of God That many of the Fortune 500 companies Would love to get their hands on This kind of person For him the sky is the limit We see his thoughts Of the successful man In verse 17 We get the benefits of hearing What he's thinking He thinks to himself Notice the direction of his thoughts He hits it big He enters then into The problem-solving mode Notice what's not in his thoughts His thoughts are dominated By the earthly trinity Of me, myself, and I No God thoughts No thoughts of others Notice the successful man's words In verse 18 He voiced his big plans

It reminds me of James chapter 4 Listen to what it says Come now you who say Today or tomorrow We will go into such and such a town And spend a year there And trade And make a profit And yet verse 14 says You do not know What tomorrow will bring What is your life For you are a mist That appears for a little time And then vanishes Instead you ought to say If the Lord wills We will live and do this or that And as it is You boast in your arrogance All such boasting is evil So whoever knows the right thing to do And fails to do it for him It's sin Notice his self-evaluation He gives himself high marks Building bigger was on his mind A question that I believe You and I need to ask ourselves

On this afternoon How do you handle prosperity? That's what we see in the text Here's a man that has done well The proverbial ship has come in And are the direction of his thoughts Upwards Or outward His thoughts are about me And more And my future And my comfort Here's the deal The picture that Jesus paints for us In this text Is that of a bad steward Of a good fortune A bad steward Of a good fortune Good fortune has come its way And as most often the case With good fortune friends Comes good opportunities With good fortune Come great opportunities For you and me to do what we need to do with that

As good stewards of all that God Gives us What do you do when your good fortunes increase? When things go well For you When sales are up And goals are met And you're rewarded accordingly When a job promotion comes When tenure has been secured When your job search ends up with your dream job Young people What do you do When your allowance increases?

During my Judson years There was a church in Oak Park That sold a piece of property And they did so well With that property That they were able to buy A building But then they had Lots of money left over Guess what they did?

[16:16] They made a distribution Among some of the other churches In that area JBC being one of those Almost unheard of They shared financially Generous joy Characterized This particular church For over 20 years or so Shirley and I Have had the privilege Of going to a very Comfortable Getaway retreat place In Michigan Privilege of a couple That for most of the year They don't use that place But they offer it as a retreat place For those who are doing City ministry Where they can get away For a little R and R A little rest and relaxation And believe me It's like going to the cottage Where you get up there And you breathe And then you get back

And leave And you come back to Chicago But it's good When you can get away I remember being there When the owner Was securing the property Next door And with great Great joy It delighted him so That he was going to be able To secure more property For another place In order to be able to bless More people These This couple They're good stewards Of good fortune Huh?

Not so in this particular text That's before us The rich man was a bad steward Of good fortune On last week I talked Tom McKibbin and I Were talking a little bit After service And he told me about His very hard working dad Who had a job Making deliveries In the homes of people Tom's father's comment Was this You can It's easy to identify Those who are Owned By their stuff It's easy to identify A person Who is Owned By their Stuff Don't sit here Don't walk there You know I mean There are certain rules That are appropriate But sometimes We can go a little A bit overboard Huh?

Our stuff Can be godlike Can it? Huh? If we're not careful Here in the text We see a man Who was Owned By his stuff Huh?

When we are owned By our stuff When greed Wins We lose Opportunities Opportunities To do good Opportunities To share So Jesus' words Here provide For you and me A reality check They call us To the things That really matter His word Helps us To navigate This very Mind Filled World That encourages Excess At every turn A world That's inflicted With the disease Known as Affluenza And if we're Not careful We'll find Ourselves Victim Of this Kind of Year Round Flu Huh?

[19:39] It's so much A part of The air That we breathe The bigger The better The newer Huh? There was a popular Ad that ran Some years ago On WBBM Said something Like this Now you really Want that Mercedes Benz Don't you?

And I was Saying No Now on the other Hand if they Said a new CRV Now that might Appeal to me But again This appeal To the bigger The better The more Cushioned The more Comfortable Huh?

So Greed Wins We lose Relationally We lose Personally But also We lose Spiritually Don't we? Huh?

It keeps us From the very Life of God Because he Is misplaced In our Affections That's what We see this Man in the text He didn't Have the Mindset of The psalmist In psalm 73 And I would Trust that This is your Mindset here This afternoon Whom Have I In heaven But you And there's Nothing on Earth that I Desire Besides you You're my Chief joy My flesh And my Heart May fail But God Is the Strength of My heart And my Portion Forever Greed Diverts us From the True altar And causes Us to Bow down To false Gods Of success And prosperity And when we Position ourselves In that Way In that Manner Friends We Lose

Huh But notice Here God gets The last Word Doesn't He Huh He said The man In verse 18 But in Verse 20 But God Said to Him It was a One word Indictment Fool Huh One word It was an Indictment Of his Lifestyle The fool Is the Fog Is in The fog Created by His own Thinking Blind Really to What is Actually Sensible Blind To things That really Matter Blind To things That matter In time And for Eternity The fool Is blind That way For this Man who Was ready To live On earth But he Was not Ready To die His Treasures Were on Earth And he Would leave Everything Here Paul put It well To Timothy For we

[22 : 30] Brought Nothing Into The world And we Cannot Take Anything Out Of the World But if We have Food And clothing With These We Will Be Content Here Was a Man Preparing For Many Years Verse 19 Not Knowing That Within Hours He Would be Forever Separated From the Things That he Prized So So Highly The man In the Text Was owned By the Gifts From God Rather Than Own By God Himself One Word Indictment For Him Could That be A one Word Indictment For Us Jesus Words Suggest That Earthly Treasures Are Not The Only Ones That That Make That We Can Make Deposits Into Those Kind Of Treasures Not The Only Place Where Deposits Can Be Made So Is The One Who Lays Up Treasure For Himself And

Is Not Rich Toward God There Are Deposits That You And I Can Make On Earth That Will Go Cha-ching In Heaven When We Are Good Stewards Of Our Good Fortune On Earth Deposits Are Made In Heaven When We Invest In God's Kingdom Interest On Earth We Are Storing Up Treasures In Heaven As For The Rich Listen To Paul's Words To Timothy That Say Essentially The Same Thing As For The Rich In This Present World Charge Them That They Do Not Be Haughty Nor Set Their Certainty Of Riches But On God Who Richly Provides Us With Everything To Enjoy They Are To Do Good To Be Rich In Good Works And To Be Generous And Ready To Share The Storing Up Treasures For Themselves As A Good Foundation For The Future So That They May Take Hold On Life That Is Truly Life!

I Can Counter Greed For Prosperity To Not Turn Into Greed Gaining Must Be Countered By Generous Giving Gaining Must Be Countered By Generous Giving The Warning Of Jesus Is A Warning To People Of Good Fortune Today Are You A Good Steward Of Your Good Fortune If You Listen To The Voices From Below They Shout Greed Is Good Those Were The Words Of Garten Gekko In The 1987 Movie Wall Street Gekko Was Addressing The Stockholders Of The Tell Dar Paper Company And At The End Of That Of The Speech That Chided The Lack Of Productivity Of

Our Under Producing Executives This Is What He Had To Say This Is The Point Ladies And Gentlemen That Greed For Lack Of A Better Word Is Good Greed Is Right Greed Works Greed Clarifies Cuts Through And Captures The Essence Of The Evolutionary Spirit Greed In All Of Its Forms Greed For Life For Money For Love Knowledge Has Marked The Upward Surge Of Mankind And Greed You Mark My Words Will Not Only Save Teldar Paper But That Other Malfunctioning Corporation Called The USA Thank You Very Much He Closes At The End Of Gecko's Three And A Half Minute Speech Of Course There Was What Applause The Voice From Below Greed Is Good

The Voice From Above Be On Guard Watch Out For Greed Huh That Was Jesus Words And That Was The Essence Of This Parable That He Painted For Us In Our Text Today And If Your Preparation Has Been Only For Earthly Living Friends You And I Will Be Eternally Poor Preparing For Eternity Begins With A Relationship With God Through His Son Have You Trusted Christ Work Alone To Be In A Right Relationship With God Such Is The Beginning!

[27 : 20] A Changed Life Orientation A Change In Direction That Governs And Controls And Spills Over In Everything Else That You And I Do We Live On Earth Not Exclusively For The Things Of Life We Live On Earth As Citizens Of Another World This World Is Not Our Home We Hold On To Things Of This World Loosely And Loosely Doesn't Mean Irresponsibly But Loosely Jesus Teaches Us That The Giver Of Good Fortune Must Not Be Ignored And That's God A Life That Majors On God's Gifts But Ignores That God Who Gives It Is A Wasted Life A Life That Focuses Only On The Things That Have Value On Earth Is A Wasted!

Life We Must See The Folly Of Being Well Off On Earth But Impoverished In Eternity As Followers Of Christ We Must Not Be People Who Are Owned By Our Stuff Gifts From God Without A Heart For God Will Leave A Person Broke And Empty And Matters That Really Count And So Friends May We Listen Closely To Jesus Who Says To Us Through This Passage Watch Out For Greed When Greed Wins We Lose Relation Personally And Spiritually Let's Pray Dear Lord We Give Thanks This Evening For Your Words To Us And Lord We Understand The

Gravity Of Your Words Living In This World And Feeling The Forces In This World And Yes Even In Our Own Hearts And We Would Pray Search Me Oh God And Know My Heart Try Us Try Me And Know Our Thoughts See If There Be Any Wicked Way In Us Then Lord Lead Us In The Way Ever Lasting We Bless You We Honor You This Evening Amen Let's Stand And Let's Make A Declaration Together Here On This Afternoon All Jesus All For Jesus■