

The Rich Fool

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[0:00] Well, last Sunday we heard of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke, how he had been invited over to the house of a Pharisee for a meal. And Jesus could hardly sit down at the table before they had found fault with him.

And so Jesus gave them some strong words of rebuke and warning about their hypocrisy. And then Jesus just walked out.

And the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, they came out after him and they began to attack him with all kinds of questions. And a very large crowd gathered around to listen.

And Jesus began to warn his followers in the crowd not to follow after the hypocritical ways of the Pharisees who did things to be esteemed by others.

He told his followers to fear God rather than men. He told them they should not be ashamed to publicly acknowledge him before others.

[1:15] He told them that when they're brought before synagogues and rulers and authorities, they shouldn't worry or be anxious about what to say. Because God would give them the words to say through his Holy Spirit.

And then all of a sudden, a man in the crowd calls out to Jesus, Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.

We almost have to laugh at this guy. I mean, we wonder, is this guy listening to Jesus at all? No.

But what he says here has absolutely nothing to do with what Jesus has been teaching about.

I mean, Jesus is talking to his followers about how they should fear God. How they should trust him.

And this man just sort of totally interrupts the teaching moment.

Totally unrelated. It's not even a question about something Jesus has said on another occasion.

He's come to Jesus to try and get Jesus to tell his brother to divide the inheritance with him.

[2:35] We almost have to laugh at the social awkwardness of this moment. I mean, in the middle of this very large crowd, this guy's trying to get Jesus to tell his brother what to do.

Because he wants his part of his father's estate. And Jesus' response to him just makes me smile.

Verse 14. Jesus replied, Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?

I love this. Of course, the answer to that question is nobody. No one has appointed me to settle personal disputes.

Now, of course, one day Jesus will judge the world at the end. But at this moment, he has not come to settle people's personal disputes with each other.

So we have to wonder what this guy was thinking. We don't know. Maybe he thought he could use Jesus' words as leverage to get his brother to do the divvying up of the property with him.

[3:46] Maybe he thought Jesus would take his side because his brother was treating him unfairly. Perhaps the man even thought that by calling out like this in public, in front of all these people, it would sort of shame his brother into action.

But Jesus just refuses to get involved. And what happens next probably made him feel pretty embarrassed for having tried this.

Verse 15. Then Jesus said to them, Watch out. Be on your guard against all kinds of greed.

Life does not consist in an abundance of possessions. So maybe at first this man had wanted a sort of public vindication.

But what Jesus gives him is sort of a public rebuke. He warns the whole crowd about being greedy. And it seems implied here that this was the true heart of this man who had just called out to him.

[4:58] Greed. And one thing we don't want to miss here is the shift. Notice the shift in who Jesus is talking to. First it's the man.

Man. Then he said to them. So Jesus shifts from talking to this one guy to talking to his followers in the crowd.

Just like with the hypocrisy of the Pharisees moments ago, Jesus turns this into a teachable moment for his disciples. And I think this shift is really important to notice because it could be really easy for all of us here to say, Wow, look at that guy.

He sure struggled with greed. To be able to do that in front of all those people. But now Jesus isn't just talking to that guy anymore. He shifts to talking to all of his followers because greed is something we all need to watch out for.

Greed is a temptation we all need to be on guard against. And I think what Jesus says here deserves careful consideration.

[6:17] One thing that I noticed here for the first time just this past week as I was reading this again, Jesus says, Be on your guard against all kinds of greed.

Or as another translation puts it, Every form of greed. Every type of greed. Have you ever stopped to think about how there are different forms, different kinds of greed?

Greed has many different faces. It can show up in many different ways in our lives. Here are just a few that I thought of.

Of course, there are fights over money and possessions like we're seeing between these two brothers in the passage. A fight over who gets what when a parent dies. We see sort of this greed raising its ugly head at the end of a person's life.

But even at the beginning of someone's life, greed is a factor there too. As children fight over toys, it's mine.

[7:34] We see it all the time as parents. And I don't mean just of our own kids. I mean of kids in general. We watch a child gather up all of a particular toy.

And then another kid comes along and he just wants to play with one of them. But the child with all of them refuses to share even one with the other kid.

And so greed is at work in the heart from the time we are young as we fight over belongings. We can also kind of probe into sort of the meaning of the word greed that Jesus uses here.

It means to desire more than one's share or do. A greedy heart is never satisfied.

It always wants more. It never has enough. It can't be content with just some of a good thing. It wants as much as possible of it.

[8:39] Or all of it, if possible. I haven't really thought through this the full way yet, but I wonder if our strong impulse to collect all sorts of things is driven by greed.

I have to get them all. Why? What's wrong with just having three of them? How much of our hard-earned money do we spend on collecting things that we don't really need?

Coins, stamps, cards, toys, figurines, miniatures, board games, books, tools.

Truthfully, people are known to collect anything and everything. And it's often marked by some level of obsession and attraction to a particular thing.

Followed by an inordinate number of purchases and dollars spent. people collect Coke cans, McDonald's paraphernalia, traffic cones.

[10:08] This lady has a collection of banana stickers, water bottle labels, and yes, even barf bags.

Can you imagine that? Come check out my barf bag collection. Maybe both.

I don't know. In fact, we even collect junk. Straight up junk. Because it's always good to have more stuff we reason.

There's value in that stuff we tell ourselves. Now, I'm not going to go so far today as to try to tell you where the line is between an honest and reasonable hobby and a collecting driven by greed.

Only God can truly know and search our hearts in those areas. And so, I want to encourage you to open your heart to Him and ask Him about it. Another kind of greed wants to have all of something in order to keep it from others.

[11:24] To have it all for oneself. Another kind of greed desires everything that's new and shiny. There's a discontent that starts to rise in your heart over the old one that's just slightly worn and doesn't have all the latest features.

And this one has 10% more battery life. And it's made of aircraft-grade aluminum. It's got a higher resolution camera and a better accelerometer if we even know what that part of the phone does.

And if I could just get that one I'd be happy. Then there's the greediness about having only the things of the highest quality.

The things that will last a lifetime that are built of the premium materials. The solid oak. The marble countertops. The stainless steel.

The top of the line. And then there's even that covetous side of greed. The side of greed that wants it only because somebody else has it.

[12:42] We wouldn't have even thought of that but then the neighbor came out with that new lawnmower. There's even the proud side of greed that just wants to boast to others to show off the stuff that we get and accumulate to others.

The point here is that greed has many forms and faces and Jesus wants us to guard against all of them. Be on your guard against all kinds of greed.

greed. Life does not consist in an abundance of possessions. That's the lie of greed.

That life consists in an abundance of possessions. That the more we have the better the life. Jesus says no.

It's not so. it does not consist in an abundance of possessions. Collecting amassing having more having better is not what life is about.

[13:51] True life is about something else. It's about something far greater. And now Jesus reinforces this warning this big truth with the parable.

he gives us an illustration. And he told them this parable. The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest.

He thought to himself what shall I do? I have no place to store my crops. Then he said this is what I'll do.

I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones and there I will store my surplus grain. And I'll say to myself you have plenty of grain laid up for many years.

Take life easy. Eat drink and be merry. But God said to him you fool this very night your life will be demanded from you.

[15:00] Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself. This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.

So this parable is about a farmer who gets an exceptionally good harvest. The man was already rich. He was a rich man. But then God blesses him with this unusually good harvest and the yield is so great that he doesn't have enough storage space for all the crop.

And so he comes up with this plan to tear down his barn or storehouse and build bigger ones. The translation on screen here misses it a little bit but some others have sort of the detail.

It's not just a place to store his grain but all his goods. There I will store all my grain and my goods.

And what's maybe surprising about this example up till now is that it doesn't sound all that bad.

Does it? I mean it kind of sounds almost prudent doesn't it? He's thinking ahead. He's dealing with the problem of not having enough space.

[16:21] We do this too right? We've run out of space in this home or in this vehicle and so let's sell or leave this one let's get a bigger one right? What's wrong with that?

But notice the attitude and the thoughts of the rich man. First we notice that there's absolutely no mention of God or of giving thanks to God.

That's totally absent. Next we notice that this man seems only concerned with himself. Look at all the pronouns he uses.

What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops. This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones and there I will store my surplus grain and I'll say to myself even the sentence is totally directed to himself.

I love the English Standard Version. It gives a very literal translation. I will say to my soul soul you have ample goods laid up for many years.

[17:36] Relax eat drink and be merry. money. This man is storing up only for himself.

He is thinking nothing of others. There is no thought to giving or sharing the surplus with anyone or even selling it to those around who may be in need.

It's all about piling it up for me. money. And then we notice what his plan is. His plan now that he has accumulated so much is just to relax.

To take it easy. To indulge himself with food and drink for his own pleasure. Now strictly speaking he may legally have the right to do whatever he wants with his crop.

It's his crop. He could keep the whole thing for himself. But when we factor God into all of this let's ask the question has God put him on earth and blessed him with this wealth so that he can use it only for himself and indulge himself for the rest of his days?

[19:01] In fact God has created work with an inherent goodness to it such that by our work we bring benefit to others we help others.

This man now that he has more than enough for himself he says I'm not even going to do that anymore I'm just going to take it easy I'm going to relax I'm just going to live off what I've accumulated and it's all about me.

I have all I need. well then comes the voice of God in this parable and as we expect it's a word of rebuke verse 20 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 this is sort of the surprise and the irony the man at first he just appeared to be prudent but God straight up calls him imprudent fool why because he's not thought about God or others but only of himself he's not thought about where he stands with

God after his life is over but only of his life here and now he has been wicked selfish and greedy and because of that will come punishment from God and he has spent the life that God gave him making preparations for himself but God says you're not going to get to do what you planned with this great harvest because you will not live many years I'm taking back the life I gave you tonight and then there's a sobering question God asks here then who will get what you have prepared for yourself and the answer is not you but someone else you will not get all you have prepared for yourself but somebody else will and here's the irony he spent his life storing up things for himself only to lose it all when he dies

Jesus himself gives the moral of the story in verse 21 this is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God let's not miss that word whoever just like with the man in the crowd this is not just a story about one man's foolishness selfishness and greed Jesus says this is a picture of how it will go for whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God Jesus is warning his disciples he's warning us so that we don't make the rich fool's mistake we are not to store up things for ourselves but we are to store up things for

[22:43] God we are to be rich toward God that's kind of an odd phrase but I think the parallelism here helps us understand it greed is the passionate pursuit of earthly things for ourselves for our own benefit but we are to passionately pursue heavenly things for God for his gain for his name and his glory and his kingdom and his pleasure I think that's what it means to be rich toward God only then will we receive from God the commendation that I think we all long to hear well done good and faithful servant so how do we do this how do we learn the lesson that Jesus wants us to learn here and how do we respond to this well let me just point us back to the first thing

Jesus said back up in verse 15 he said be on your guard against all kinds of greed be on your guard against it normally when we use that phrase it's it's about external dangers right like be on your guard against thieves or identity theft or whatever but here Jesus tells us to be on our guard against something that's inside our own hearts that can happen in our own hearts greed is not just a behavior it's a sinful attitude or desire of the heart that leads us to act in greedy ways and so how can you guard your heart against greed I think the first thing to do is to pray to ask

God to convict us and to reveal to us the ways that we have been greedy the greed that's in our hearts to help us understand and see that within us and of course as he does we need to repent of that we need to confess it to God we need to ask for his forgiveness but often times we don't even get to that because like the two men that we heard about do we even see the greed in our own lives others may see it but do we and so we need to pray we need to ask God to show it to us and again let me put before you those famous words of David which you can use in your own prayer to God about this I love these words from Psalm 139 23 and 24 he says search me God and know my heart test me and know my anxious thoughts we could put greedy thoughts in there too see if there's any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting!

Open your heart before God to the possibility that you've been falling short of what God has for you in this area of your life does your monthly budget reflect a generous heart and kingdom priorities or does it reflect the accumulation of possessions stuff that you didn't need but bought because it looked good on the shelf or because someone else had one think back over the past few years are there some spending sprees or big purchases you can think of that deep down inside you know we're motivated by greed and have you owned that and confessed that to God or are you just sort

of trying to pretend like it didn't happen or continue to justify those things to yourself to ease your guilt here's the good news if we confess our sins

God is faithful and just and he will forgive us our sins and cleanse us of all unrighteousness because he is merciful gracious and loving he is eager to forgive us for the times we have wasted or mismanaged what he has entrusted to us Jesus died to atone for all of it so that we don't have to carry that guilt with us through the rest of our lives some practical things we can do to guard against greed one is to actually have a budget to have a plan for what we'll do with the income God gives us because it's really there on the page that we can prayerfully evaluate what we're spending on and who we're!

[28:15] spending on and how much who we're giving to and how much another practical thing we can do to guard against greed is to minimize our time just letting our eyes wander over stuff that we don't need if off the top of your head you know that you don't need something from that store chuck that flyer straight in the garbage don't even open it if you live in town here chuck it in the recycling bin or if you know there is something you need from that store just flip through it fast looking to see if it's in there and on sale and if not throw that thing away the same principle applies to scrolling on Amazon or wandering through stores just to kill time there's always some sort of sale on and there's no end to the new and shiny things that we can buy you're not missing out on a once in a lifetime opportunity to get that thing we have to take our boredom somewhere fruitful and productive discontentment and greed rise so quickly when we spend our time just wandering through the stores or scrolling online discovering all the things that we don't have and that we didn't even know that we needed and when we do come across something that we want to buy another practical thing we can do that's probably necessary for most of us is just practice slowing down see it but then walk away from it pray about it do I really need that how has life been without that thing if I've been managing well enough is it really a tool that will increase my productivity and help me in my work or is it just a toy is it just something

I want to have so that I can play with it and add it to my collection sometimes choosing just to delay a few days or a week or even a month or two on larger purchases helps us to just get over that urge to have it and then we might even realize we didn't even really want it in the first place or need it we might realize that there's other things more important that we need to be saving for or giving to or spending on so practice just slowing down take a deep breath and just walk away if the Lord wants you to have it it'll still be there the next time you come back or maybe you can make do with the used one or maybe we could just ask him for it and he would give it to us these are just some practical suggestions but more important than those is that we fight the battle in the heart that we guard against greed in here and the way greed works is by us seeing things and then believing that we'll be happier if we have them or have more of them and ultimately much of greed goes right back to believing that lie that life consists in an abundance of possessions there's no better place to weaken the power of that lie than by putting our mind onto some of the truths about life and money and the kingdom that

God has given us in here finally this passage reminds us of who we belong to that God has not put us here just to live for ourselves but that our lives are in a sense on loan from God we belong to him we are to live for his pleasure and not just for our own truly though our greatest pleasure in life is found in living to please God because we were made by him and for him and so I'll leave us with that word of Jesus be on your guard against all kinds of greed life does not consist in an abundance of possessions let's pray Lord

Jesus we thank you for these words and they make us squirm and they convict us but we know that we need these words we're surrounded by a culture of greed and so we invite you to come and do that work in our hearts of exposing that to us helping us see it and helping us to turn the other way and to live for you and for eternity for the things that matter most open our eyes to those things so that we can pursue!

them with passion for your glory we ask this in your name!