

The Rich Fool - Luke 12:13-21

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[0 : 00] Well good morning, I'm grateful that you have come to worship the Lord with us this morning. We've been in a sermon series, a short sermon series looking at several parables in the Gospels the last several weeks.

We'll be doing this until early September where we will begin a new sermon series in the book of Acts, but we're going to be continuing those parables. This morning we'll be looking at a parable that is entitled The Rich Fool, and in order to start this morning, I would love for Bethany to come join me.

If you would. And Miss Samara, could you come help me for this morning? These two young ladies are going to help us start the sermon this morning. And imagine we were living in 1950, and let me just frame that for you.

In 1950, the average new car price was \$2,200. And so that was the average new car price. And let's imagine these two families, this is Bethany and Miss Samara, and Miss Samara, could you come stand next to me?

That's great. So these two young ladies, let's imagine they live in this area, they live in this neighborhood, and their family's set in 1950, keep in mind, 1950. Hey, why don't you guys just go ride your bikes around?

[1 : 12] And it's safe in 1950, so all the concerns that you have about safety you do not have today. And so we're in 1950. And so they're out riding their bikes, and before they set out, their parents give them some money.

And so Miss Samara, can you have a dollar? And let me just share with you, I gave her a dollar, let's share with you what's Samara can do with a dollar. For a dime, you could have rode the carousel downtown, so she could ride the carousel several times to her heart's content. She can buy a two foot long rope licorice for another dime. And so she could have all the junk food to her heart's content and ride the carousel several times on a dollar.

And Bethany though, I'm going to give you, her parents set out with her for the hundred dollars. And so she, exactly. So which of these children would you say you have the greater concern for? Do you have the greater concern for Miss Samara as she goes out and sets out on the bike ride today? Or would you have the greater concern for Miss Bethany? Which would you say? Miss Bethany. And if we were to ask why, you would think, well, I don't know if Bethany knows the total buying power of that.

[2 : 22] And if she would use that wisely, and that's no, that's not an indictment on Miss Bethany's character or anything like that. But let me ask this, Miss Samara, would you like a hundred dollars instead of a dollar?

Are you happy with yours? You're fine, okay? She's great. Wonderful. So that kind of sets up the parable for today. You two ladies can go have a seat. Thank you very much.

That concern that we may have with for Bethany with a hundred dollars is perhaps the same concern that we have in the parable this morning.

And so if you have your Bible with you, if you could turn to Luke chapter 12, 13 through 21, it will be our text. And let us read the word of the Lord together. Luke 12, beginning in verse 13.

Someone in the crowd said to him, teacher, tell me. Not my brother to divide the inheritance with me. But he said to him, man, who made me a judge or arbiter over you?

[3 : 28] And he said to them, take care and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist of the abundance of his possessions.

And he told them a parable saying, the land of a rich man produced plentifully, and he thought to himself, what shall I do? Or 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 where I will store my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years. Relax, eat, drink and be merry. But God said to him, fool, this night, your soul is required of you. And the things that you have prepared, whose will they be?

So this one who lays, so is the one who lays up his treasure for himself and is not rich toward God. Let's pray.

[4 : 27] Gracious God, help us to read the Bible and think about it together this morning. May your spirit be our guide and instructor.

May we learn and believe, trust and live in light of its truth this morning. And only you, Gracious God, can accomplish this. And it's in your name, Jesus.

Amen. In the surrounding context of our passage today, I would like to have us look at verse one real quick. Let's find the context of our passage.

It says in the meantime, chapter 12, verse one, when many thousands of people had gathered together, they began trampling one another and he began saying to his disciples first.

So the crowd is large and there's beginning to be some pushing and shoving and people are trampling on one another, not deliberately, but because the throng of people is so large.

[5 : 25] And he turns to his disciples and he begins to teach them firstly. And he's looking with me in verses two and three, nothing is covered up or will be revealed or hidden that will not be known.

Therefore whatever you have said in the dark, it shall be in the light and whatever you have whispered in the private rooms, it shall be proclaimed on the housetops. Look with me in verse four. I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill your body and after that have nothing more they can do.

But I will warn you of whom to fear. Fear him who after he is killed has authority to cast him into hell. Yes, tell him. Fear him. I tell you, fear him. And look with me in verse eight and nine and I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will acknowledge before the angels of God, but whoever denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God.

You see, Jesus is teaching his disciples and he is saying one day everything will be exposed. Your thoughts, your intentions, it all will be revealed.

Jesus continues to encourage his disciples, take discipleships seriously. Do not fear men. Fear the one whom after he has died can cast you into hell.

[6 : 47] Don't fear people. Fear God. Therefore acknowledge the Lord before people. Don't fear them. Acknowledge him as the Father despite your persecution.

Don't play around with discipleship. Don't play around with your relationship with the Lord. Take the Lord seriously. In the midst of this rather serious conversation, this warning, this exhortation, this sharpening conversation that the Lord is having, instructing his disciples, Jesus is obviously clarifying and raising the bar for what it looks like to follow him.

And then he tells this parable. And he tells this parable that we just read. And it is as if Jesus is talking to his disciples and he is teaching and he pauses to take a breath and someone blurts in and says, Lord, someone in the crowd said to him, teacher, tell my brother to divide my inheritance with me.

And out of nowhere of this serious take the Lord seriously, everything is going to be laid bare. Someone interjects and says, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.

Almost. And so Jesus beautifully teaches the crowds and uses this man as an illustration, his concern to illustrate another way of communicating.

[8 : 15] Take the Lord seriously. Through this parable. And someone in the crowd says this request, but let's be, and this request is not out of character, not out of line.

In the first century, rabbis, teachers, the rabbis were considered in Israel's time to be capable arbiters between disputes of property.

So this kind of thing who would consult the law of God, who people who would know the law of God, who could arbitrate issues like this, it was not uncommon. So the question to Jesus is not out of line or uncommon.

And but notice the young man though is not really asking Jesus to do anything. He's telling the Jesus what to do. The man has already played jury and judge.

He knows what Jesus ought to do. And so he's telling Jesus what he needs him to do. He's not really asking him a question. And Jesus refuses to respond to the request.

[9 : 21] In verse 14, he says, man, who made me judge your arbiter over to you. And Jesus refuses to be the arbiter. Let me say it this way. Jesus does not give him what he asks.

That is to be the arbiter. But Jesus does give him what he needs. And what he's about to give him is a warning. And that's what he needs. He's not going to play the role of an arbiter. That's what you ask for.

I'm going to give you what you need and you need a warning. So then he tells them and look at this warning and he said to them. Now notice the pronoun changes a little.

He says, but he said to him, man, who made me arbiter. But then he says, and he said to them. So now Jesus is not necessarily directly talking to the man, but now he's talking to the man, to the crowd to teach them all what he has been saying about taking the Lord seriously.

And notice the concern. He states the warning two ways and he repeats himself, if you will, take care and be on guard.

[10 : 27] Why isn't it just not sufficient for one warning? Take care or be on guard. But instead he incorporates both of them. He wants, so that repetition is for emphasis.

And so what is it that is so deadly? Greed. And this greed is so palpable. It's in all of us.

And it's interesting that how ever present or ubiquitous greed is in society that we all have. It's amazing that there's no support groups for this.

I mean, you can find a support group almost for anything, but I've never met a group or I've heard of a group. I've heard of addictions for gambling. I've heard of addictions for all these other groups.

But there's no like, hi, my name is Scott. I struggle with greed and you all would say, welcome Scott. And you would introduce yourself. We would say the same thing.

[11 : 25] There's no support group for greed. And yet it's so palpable in society and in all of us.

There's no support for greed, that is, I want more, better, newer, nicer. There's no support group for the covetous. I want what you have. There's no support group for the jealous, begrudging others for what they do possess.

Greed we are all familiar with the temptation. For example, you could go down this same plot line in other with other things, but let me just begin with a young married couple.

Let's call the young married couple. Let's give them names that are probably not in this room. So I don't offend anyone. So let's call this person Flouta and Bjarni. So Flouta and Bjarni are married. They're a young married couple. And they're not wealthy and they begin poor like many young married couples.

[12 : 27] And so their first anniversary consists of where can we go and stay free that we can drive to because we can't afford to fly. So Uncle Tony lives in Portland and so they commute from Spokane to and stay with Uncle Tony and they do all the free things.

They visit Moldonoma Falls, they climb Beacon Rock, they go to the Oregon coast and they base themselves out of Uncle Tony's house. And Flouta and Bjarni are okay with that, but they realize that their social media posts are not what others do.

And so they long for a beggar and better vacation in the future. So around their five year anniversary line, they have a little more money and they go to places that others get to.

And so now they're on a plane and they go to Disneyland or something like this. But that won't satisfy either. They want something nicer. They've never been on a cruise ship.

I mean, let's fly to a destination, get on a cruise ship and then let's take all the extra opportunities that are available on a cruise ship. And then France looks a little nicer and never been to Europe.

[13 : 28] We'll hike all over Europe. Well, let's go to Europe. But that won't satisfy. And what about an African safari? And whether we're talking about vacations or whether we're talking about possessions of my house doesn't satisfy, we want to upgrade.

What about a lake place? What we're talking about a vehicle, the old jalopy, and then you don't want to drive that anymore. You wanted something nice. We could do this with many different examples, but this is the natural tendency and propensity that exists in all of us.

And there's this temptation that Jesus is speaking to about this man, the greed, the desire to have more.

Jesus said to him in the bottom of verse 15, this desire to have more for one's life beyond guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist of the abundance of one's possessions.

What does greed and covetous do? It fuels disagreement and disharmony. We all probably could tell stories of inheritances that have not been divided rightly and how much discord and disunity and

families that has brought.

[14:52] And it is true here. What is so dangerous about greed and covetousness is it fuels disagreement. It fuels disharmony.

It is also idolatry. Look with me how Paul writes to both Colossians, the church at Colossians, the church at Ephesus, as God's word says about covetousness and greed, put to death therefore what is earthly and dual, sexual immorality, impurity, passions, evil desires, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

Second, for you may be sure of this that everyone who is sexually immoral, impure, or who is covetous, that is an idolater, has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

And it's interesting that among these sexual sins, which you think, okay, I understand, that's sin, that's idolatry, and then also covetousness.

It's idolatry. And you say, why is covetousness idolatry? It's the desire to acquire and keep for oneself more money and material things is an attack on God's exclusive right over your love, trust, and obedience.

[16:14] You say, I want more and I'm going to keep it for myself and the Lord is saying, but I can provide for you, I can provide for you. Would you trust me? No, you're going to trust your stuff.

It's idolatry. Jesus warns your life does not consist of the abundance of your possessions. This is contrary to the natural thinking.

Even today's thinking that is provided by the infamous bumper sticker, he who dies with the most toys wins. It's what fuels modern day hoarding.

Jesus is reminding us that of the most important things, those factors that actually define life are not things at all.

Wealth does not give life nor happiness.

[17:12] And it seems almost as you read this text that did Jesus make a mistake? And you say in what way? Why is Jesus telling a story about a man who thinks he doesn't have enough?

He's the one who's been robbed of some form of inheritance. Why is he telling the guy who doesn't have much or at least he doesn't think he has enough a story about a rich man?

If I'm going to be told a story, tell me a story about someone in my circumstances. Don't tell me about someone I can't relate to who's rich.

But that's exactly what Jesus does. Why is that? Because outwardly they may be opposites. The one who doesn't think he has enough and the one who's clearly rich, but inwardly they are twins. They have the same problem. For the rich and the poor both think if I have the right amount of possessions then life will be good.

[18:11] It's interesting, a survey was done years ago and of all socioeconomic spectrum and the question was asked basically what percentage more would it take for you to be happy?

And almost across the board, whether you're poor or you're the super rich, 20% more was the average. So no matter what station you are in, whether you think you don't have enough or you think you have enough, you both don't think you have enough and you're both greedy.

So outwardly they are opposites, inwardly they are twins. And the parable then begins in verse 16.

And he told them a parable saying to address this problem they both share.

The land of the rich man produced plentifully and he thought to himself, what shall I do? I have nowhere to store my crops. I will do this. I will tear down my barns and build larger ones and I will store my grain and my goods and I will say to my soul, soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years.

Relax, eat, drink and be merry. On one hand this rich man does the most natural thing.

[19:24] He has extensive holdings and God gave him incredible yield of crops, the very productive land he has found himself in a very favorable position.

God has given them an increase, God has sent the rains, God has sent the sun, God has made the land fertile, God has made the ground to prosper, God has blessed him wonderfully. And as the result of what God has done in his life, he has found himself with more than he knows what to do with.

And so he makes, we would say it in our modern vernacular, he has made a capital investment for the longevity and storage of his perishable goods.

And it would sound like such good stewardship. We would want him, he would probably be on Forbes magazine, he would probably be on some board somewhere and people would ask him to

be their financial planner and all of this would happen.

And yet I want to read this parable again with the emphasis that I will put on it because it's the emphasis that the Lord wants us to read because something is interesting.

[20 : 28] There's only 54 words found in this parable, 18 of which, which is 33%, are personal pronouns of I, me, my, my soul.

So let me read it again and let's get a hint of what the problem may be. The rich man produced plentifully, 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 I will store my grain and my goods and I will say to my soul, soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years, eat, relax, drink and be merry.

All of a sudden the problem becomes more clear. This man isn't maybe perhaps as wise as we thought.

And he uses the hedonistic creed coming from the Epicurean philosophy, let's eat and drink and be merry.

[21 : 49] But what does Jesus say to the man about this? He refers to him as a fool. He says, fool, this night your soul is required of you.

And the things that you have prepared, whose will they be? Ironically, the years of ease this man eagerly anticipated are unexpectedly cut short by the one who has authority over his life.

He did not fulfill his moral obligation before the Lord to give generously to him or others. God now offers him a rebuke and requires of his soul.

He requires his soul. He says his rebuke is a fool. In the Old Testament, the fool is the one who acts without God.

All the benefits of this rich fool, this self-directed planning, this labor becomes crashing down on God's command. All the grain in the world, all the wealth that this rich fool accumulated couldn't pay the debt God required.

[22 : 58] And God rejects his covetousness. God rejects his greed. The way God does it is with the lingering question, one with deep irony and tragedy.

Who will possess the things that you have prepared for yourself? Know you haul trucks are going to heaven. Another owner, another manager, another one stewarding all of your property.

Who will possess the things that you have prepared for yourself? The point of the question is the one person who will not enjoy the ownership is the rich fool.

The one who built the wealth and produced this empire for himself. He is the one who will not be the one who gets to enjoy all that he has been prepared.

Now the rich fool has new, more pressing, more eternal concerns. This night your soul is required of you. He has a new, more pressing, more eternal concern, but now it is too late.

[24 : 05] The pursuit of the possessions has left him empty in terms of his ultimate priorities before God. To focus on his possessions and not be concerned about spiritual matters is grave.

It is a long term and it is a terminal error. Fools, sorry, let's go back.

Fools think wrongly about God. Look with me in Psalm 10. He calls him a fool. It says this about a fool. The fool does not seek him.

All his thoughts are there is no God. And we know that in Psalm 14 verse 1 says a fool says in his heart, there is no God. So a fool, so this guy begins, he's a fool.

Why does he begin? I think is he a fool is because he acts as if there is no God and he will not be accountable. Second is a fool believes they will not be held accountable by God.

[25 : 09] Later in that Psalm, Psalm 10 verse 11, he says in his heart, God has first forgotten. He has hidden his face. He will never see it. He will never see my activities. God doesn't exist.

And so he will never see anything that I do. He will never see it. So he believes he will not be held accountable to God because God doesn't see it. He doesn't exist. He will never see it.

And God tells him, you are acting foolish. You are the fool. So then what is it?

Let's look with me in verse 20. So God said, I don't fool. This night your soul is required of you.

The word required there means to demand in return. The word can also be found in a financial sense to recall alone. So it means to demand in return.

[26 : 05] God sees our life. He sees our gifts, our abilities, our resources as if you will on loan. He can recall that loan at any point, and that is your death to see how you have stewarded his investment to see how you have stewarded your life.

Our lives are not our own. In Genesis, we read that God says, let us make man in our image. God created humanity. We are ultimately his. Not only is humanity his in Exodus 19 five. God says, all the earth is mine.

The psalmist goes on to say the world and all it contains, you have founded. The Lord has founded. So all the earth and all that it contains is the Lord's.

Anything that we have, we are just but mere stewards of his possessions. And one day, our souls will be required of us to give an account of how we have stewarded our lives.

[27 : 13] And on this day, the wealthy fool time was up and the Lord was recalling his investment to see what he had done with his life, his capacities, his energies, his opportunities, and even his possessions.

So what does it look then? Verse 21 reads, so is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.

What does it look like then? To not be one who lays up treasure for himself, but is to be rich toward God. What does that look like? In the context, we would obviously say it is someone who gives to the Lord.

That is obviously the context of this. And so think about the guy with the first question, tell my brother to give me my inheritance, my portion of the inheritance.

That was the original question. And so his problem was saying, listen, sir, your problem is not your brother's inheritance that you think you left out on. Your problem is greed.

[28 : 16] And that will cost you your life more than your inheritance that if you did or did not receive. That is more dangerous than any financial amount.

So be rich toward God. Be so should your brother, by implication, give you an inheritance, you are to use that, but you're probably not even using what you already have.

That's why the parable is so important. To give generously to the Lord.

That's obviously the context. But also the question can become, well, boy, if I'm generous to the Lord, who will even look out for me? Who will care for me?

What I dislike about preaching a sermon like this is sometimes we remove it from its context. So now I want to put this passage in the context and let's continue reading in verse 22.

[29 : 12] And he said to his disciples, so what if I do give generously? What who will look out for me? Keep reading in verse 22. Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life or what you will eat or about your body or what you will put on.

Your life is more than food and your body is more than clothing. Consider the ravens. They neither sow nor reap. They have no storehouses or barns. Yet God feeds them for how much more value are you than the birds?

And which of you, by being anxious, can add a single hour to your lifespan? If then you are not able to do a small thing like that, why are you anxious about the rest?

Then consider the lilies of the field, how they grow, neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you even Solomon and all of his glory was not arrayed like these.

But if God so closed the grass, which is alive in the field today and tomorrow they are thrown in the oven, how much more will you be clothed?

[30 : 11] Oh, you of little faith. And then he gives his verse 31, instead, seek his kingdom and all these things will be added to you.

So trust the Lord with provision that he has a care and concern. Yes, be generous and then let the Lord be your provision and then seek his kingdom would be a response to, what does it look to be rich toward God?

Give generosity to the Lord. Trust the Lord with his profession and seek his kingdom. So I set down to write some questions to have an assessment of am I greedy?

And so I thought, because I was convicted by these, I might want to share with them with you and let you be bothered as well. I don't want to be selfish like that.

So could you live with contentment on the same income you earned five years ago?

[31 : 18] When someone asks you for money or time for kingdom ministry, is your first impulse to find a way to give?

Somebody asked me, if Wendy and I, if we would be willing to support them because they were going to go out on mission. And it was a long-term request.

They were going to be going overseas for some time, serving the Lord in ministry. And a few years back, my wife and I looked at each other and it was difficult to find discretionary monies that we would have available that weren't already spoken for.

But then I was looking over the budget and where all the money was going. One thing that I had at the time was a subscription to get my car washed.

I had paid a monthly subscription because it was cheaper than how many times I would like to get my car washed. I thought, I'll just buy a monthly subscription and save money. But as a result, that was twenty-something dollars a month that I was spending on this monthly subscription to get my car washed anytime I wanted.

[32 : 38] But I thought, boy, there's some money. And I could wash my car in my driveway, the old fashioned way.

And I could do that and be more generous to the Lord. And so we did. And I let that subscription go. Do you believe and act as if people's economic status indicates their value as people? Is there anything in your daily life that you could go without in order to free up money for generosity?

And are you willing to forego or limit time spent on a favorite hobby in order to free yourself for service in the church or another ministry?

And if you cannot readily say yes to all of those questions, you may have greed more deeply seated in your heart than you previously thought.

[33 : 41] Greed is in all of us. It's a temptation for all of us. And I love this passage because in the context, don't forget the context.

The Lord was the throngs of people were about Him. And He was telling His disciples and telling the people, take your discipleship seriously. Take the Lord seriously.

And then the man pipes up and says, tell my brother to invite inheritance and give us my portion. And he says, OK, it's time for another parable to illustrate the importance of how to take the Lord seriously.

So he tells us parable about greed, which is common in all of us. Hence the Lord telling us in this way. Let's pray.

Lord, we begin today with a passion to live lives that are less driven and more called.

[34 : 46] A life that is marked less by fear and more freedom, less by frenzy and more faith. A life that is at the pace of your grace.

Not in the race to get more to do more to be more to shine more. By the gospel. Lord, you.

You saved. And Father, show us the difference between greed and need, the difference between trusting in our status and resting in Jesus.

Forgiving us of forgive us for all the ways. We implicitly encourage burnout and perpetuate a culture of flame out at work and at home.

May we be at the pace of your grace. Forgive us for ignoring the command to be still and know that you are God. Forgive us for not being content with what we have.

[35 : 48] And not actively seeking to keep ourselves free from the love of riches, recognition and reputation. Father, your perfect love can liberate us.

From our performance and prefer perfectionism. Drive out pride, drive out fears, drive out greed by the greater grasp of your grace.

Topple the idols in our heart by the truth of your word and power of your spirit. We love you Lord.

And we want to be a people who take you at your word. Thank you for this strong caution. Take care. Be on guard.

Love you Lord this morning. Amen.