

# Succeeding Twice

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St. John's Shaughnessy Church and the dead, and by His appearing on His kingdom. Preach the word, be urgent in ceasing and out of ceasing, convince, rebuke, and exalt, be unfailing in patience and in teaching.

For the time is coming when people will not endure some duty, but having itching ears that they will accumulate for themselves, teach us to suit their own likeness, and we turn away from listening to the truth, and wander into means. As for you, always be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill. That was the email that was sent to me, and I found it profoundly very encouraging. And I think it is a message that should be encouraging to all of us here this morning, not only today, but tomorrow, and for the rest of our lives as disciples of Christ. We are to preach the word in ceasing and out of ceasing, in times in times of trouble, and in times when there is no trouble. But as I looked at the passage that we are looking at this morning, I did not find it as encouraging as 1 Timothy chapter 4. God's word encourages, but God's word also challenges and probes. This passage all through the week, continued to probe into my very heart, asking me to answer a question that I would not like to answer in a normal time. It's a passage that challenged me, and it is a passage that will challenge you to answer this basic question. What is the goal of human life? What is the goal of human life? What is the goal of your own life? Is it possessions? Is it pleasure? Is it power? Is it knowledge? Is it success in your career? Is it sex or relationships?

Or is it nothing? What is the goal of your life? Many of us here this morning may not have theoretically given any serious thought to this very important question. But in practical life day by day, we have made some conclusions as to what the goal of our life is.

We know what our goal of our life is. We know what our goal in life is, and we pursue it in spite of what we profess to believe. The man in this story that Jesus tells, or that Luke tells, who is described in this story as one of the multitude, had come to a conclusion as to what the goal of life is.

[ 5 : 2 5 ] As far as he was concerned, the goal of life is possessions. More possessions, and much more possessions. That was the thing that consumed his life. His every waking moment was about how to get more and more. It didn't matter what was happening around him. It didn't matter how other people felt. It didn't matter what was happening in church.

It didn't matter what was happening about the mundane, about the mundane, the present.

So the moment Jesus pauses in his sermon, he raises his hand, he wants to say something. And of course, you think he's going to ask a question about what Jesus is talking about. But that was not it. He had a request to make.

He says, teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me. It's not about what Jesus is talking about. It's about his inheritance. Tell my brother. I want you to order my brother to divide the inheritance with me.

That was the most important thing. That was the most important thing in his mind. And probably this morning, I wonder what's happening in your mind. What are you thinking about? What is going on?

[ 7 : 27 ] What is going on in your mind? What do you think about this? What do you think about this? What do you think about it? What do you think about this? What do you think about this? Was this man crying out for justice? Was he asking Jesus to mediate between his brother and himself? Is that the question?

but that's what we understand as we read the question he says to Jesus tell my brother to divide not mediate between me and my brother tell my brother to divide the inheritance in other words he has decided what his rights are and he wants Jesus to pressure his brother into granting those rights all he wants is his inheritance but is that what the man needs what he really needs is a new perspective about himself about his relationships about God about eternity but also about who Jesus is is this the reason why Jesus has come into the world to divide inheritance is what this man really needs his inheritance what about the relationships involved and it's not surprising that Jesus answers the way he did in this passage verse 14 but Jesus said to him man who made me a judge or divider over you in other words I have not come at this point in time to be the one dividing inheritance and in the process splitting up the family

Christ has come to be the reconciler and to give a new perspective of ourselves to ourselves Jesus' refusal in this passage is not a proof text for the separation of church and state and it's not a proof text that tells us not to be concerned about social issues in our world but Jesus' refusal is an indication of the fact that he saw below the surface in this man's heart he saw that his real problem is not getting his fair share of the inheritance his real problem is covetousness it is greed that is the motive behind the question or the request in other words his problem will not be solved even if his brother grants him his portion of the inheritance because that's not the issue and Jesus saw right through that and so he has come to listen to Jesus on that day not really interested in what Jesus was going to say but he was going to use

Jesus as a rabbi to accomplish his selfish end and Jesus saw through that for some of us it may not be inheritance it may be our career it may be pleasure it may be knowledge it may be something else these are things we will pursue even at the expense of relationships and at the expense of our devotion to Christ at the expense of God's kingdom and God's glory and why do we do that?

we believe that the more possessions the more successes we have in life the more satisfying life will be the more I get the happier I will be but that's not necessarily true and that's why Jesus gives the warning in verse 15 and he said to them now he was not speaking to this man alone and he said to them to them includes you and I this morning verse 15 take heed and beware of all covetousness not some covetousness take heed and beware of all covetousness for a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions in other words be on guard over your hearts watch your heart be vigilant be attentive to what's going on in your heart against all forms of greed and the desire to have more and more and what's the reason that Jesus gives life does not consist in the abundance of what one has it is important that we have a minimum of things that we need but a greater abundance of goods does not necessarily mean greater abundance of life real life abundant life has a different focus the abundant life that Jesus has promised that God has promised is a life that is tied to God himself as the very center of our being and of our pursuit the worship of God devotion to God faithfulness to God's promise and God's goodness and grace a personal relationship with God himself and a life that is in contact and caring for other people is the life and the abundant life that God has promised the life that is tied to things is a life of idolatry and greed as all of us know is a God that drives each and every one of us to do the things that are not good and the worst thing about all covetousness is that it has the potential to separate us from God in this life and to separate us from God eternally that's the danger and it's right there so it is not a safe road to travel it is a dangerous road to travel it will hurt you it has hurt many people it has destroyed many people and the most disturbing reality and truth about covetousness is that

[ 14 : 34 ] God will not let you and I have the final word on this God will not let our fantasies about possessions and covetousness have the final word at some point he will call us into account and it's just a matter of time and that's why Jesus tells the parable of the rich fool but I want to point out three things about this rich fool the first thing that we find about him is what God did for him here is a man that God has done something for verse 16 and he told them a parable saying the land of a rich man brought forth plentifully the land of a rich man brought forth plentifully in other words the harvest was good he probably had worked very hard and the harvest was good and now here are the questions who owns the land is it the man or God who is the owner of land of course the answer is God and who has the power to decide whether the land would be fruitful or not is it his hard work of course not the answer is God and so what's the conclusion his wealth is a gift of God the land and the fruitfulness both of them are gifts of God and they are gifts of grace there are many of us here this morning who work very hard and work very smart but we are not rich is that true you work very hard and you work very smart but your land is not producing plentifully you want to have a show of hands so that means it has to do with

God's grace and God's gift wealth is a gift of God it's not just working very hard you're not the only one working hard and that's the point his land brought forth plentifully and it is the work of God in fact your life your wisdom your hard working ability your fruitfulness are all gifts of God and everything including your life and all that you have and all that you're going to have are on loan from God to you and they're all gifts of grace that's very important the second thing that we notice about this man is what he does for himself with God's gift we have seen what God has given to him and now we see what he does for himself with the gifts of God verse 17 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 pull down my bands 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 off for many years take your ease eat drink and be merry stop God has given him a gift God has blessed him and as a good manager he wants to manage it in a good way and he says what shall I do I'm going to pull down the bands the store houses and I'm going to build larger ones and I'm going to store the goods that's not nothing necessarily wrong about such prudence it is good for us to invest it's good for us to save it's good for us to care for what

God has given to us and not squander them there's nothing wrong but as you read the passage and see the number of times the personal pronouns appear in this passage you begin to see a problem I will I will I will I will and who did he speak to who was the audience not his friends not his family and not God he spoke to himself he said to himself I will do this he has an audience but it's the audience of only one person and that person is himself it's language that suggests self determination and absolute ownership ignoring the fact of stewardship he is now a self-made man and he is arrogant about it and he makes the fatal mistake

I will store these goods for myself and I will say to myself there are many ample goods laid up for you for many years take your ease eat drink and be merry William Barclay suggests that this is a man who could not see beyond himself and this is a man who could not see beyond this particular world all he saw was himself and all he saw was this particular present world and nothing more he was blind there is no thought about acknowledging God about giving thanks to God or using the gifts that God has given to him to honor God and he had no thought about his moral responsibility to help other people as the Bible clearly indicates all the responsibility that he had in his opinion was to himself so as a businessman he did a wonderful job it's good management but from a moral perspective he has mismanaged his wealth by not thinking about

[ 21 : 20 ] God and by not thinking about others and so the conclusion he is a total failure from God's perspective but in his mind he is a great success and from henceforth in his opinion life will be good forever and ever but he is terribly mistaken see he is terribly mistaken because what happens in verse 20 is that God's voice comes thundering to him and he said fool God said to him fool it's a clear rebuke God condemns him for his self indulgent isolation God condemns him as a fool because he thinks that the formula for the good life is to ignore God and misappropriate the gifts of

God for himself he is a fool to believe that a good life comes from investing his life into wealth rather than into God himself and it is absolutely foolish to think that the pursuit of our careers the pursuit of our little things that we want may not be money may be something else but the neglect of God is the route to a happy life God condemns such life as foolishness now God doesn't stop at condemning him he takes an action and the action that God takes is to say to him your soul is required of you and the things you have prepared whose will they be God doesn't just rebuke him he takes action he says your soul is required of you in other words you are going to die and you are required to give an account of all that you have because all that he has are gifts of

God that do not belong to him and God said the time has come when you will give account of yourself it's wonderful that God did not put a committee together and that there was no vote because God is not an Anglican God had given him time and he squandered the time he squandered the gifts of God he forgot that there was a God who has authority over him and God said time is up I wanted to give an account and so with the loss of his life he lost everything and everything came crashing down and the case was closed but there's a lingering question in the passage it says and the things you have prepared whose will there be in all the things that you put together who is going to have them the man is silent he could not answer and of course the short and immediate answer is that the one person who will not enjoy these possessions is the man who has put all of them together that's the answer to the question the one person who will not enjoy all of this is this particular man who has ignored

God and gathered things for himself but it is a question for all of us to answer at the end of the day when I pursue all the things that I want to pursue and the day comes when God says come and give account what's going to happen to all the things that you put together the pursuit of wealth without God has left the man empty and exposed to the judgment of God and so he died without his riches he died without his preoccupations he died without his success and worse of all he died without God and without hope so this was a man who succeeded once but failed forever and so Jesus concludes the sermon in verse 21 so is he who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward

God in other words this is the destiny this is the fate of any one of us here this morning who decides to pursue self and wealth and careers and relationships and power and position and pleasure at the neglect of devotion to God and that's why Jesus said be on your guard take heed take heed to yourself watch your heart watch what is going on in your heart watch your motives see God is not against wealth or success God is not against it that's not the point of the passage the point of the passage is the pursuit of things including wealth all kinds of covetousness and the neglect of God who is our creator and redeemer and savior you and

[ 27:10 ] I are creatures of God you and I are created by him and saved by him and we owe him our worship and obedience and faith so I want to conclude by saying two things to all of us here this morning for those of us who are not believers you have not given yourself to God to Jesus Christ this passage is a clear warning that God will not let you ignore him forever he will not let you ignore him the time will come when he will demand an account from you and it is just a matter of time and Jesus is speaking to you this morning and to me to repent and turn away he's not asking you to sell all your wealth and to give up your pursuit

God is asking you to recognize that he has authority over you and I and he's asking you to repent and believe in him and follow him for those of us who are believers this morning this passage is not just about the decision that was made 20 years ago it's not about 50 years ago I made the decision to abandon my gifts or my pursuit to follow Christ this is a passage that keeps asking you and I today and tomorrow every single day of our lives where is God in your pursuit Jesus is saying to disciples to you and I that a selfish accumulation of possessions and of all kinds of covetousness that ignores God is incompatible with true discipleship true discipleship is a life that puts

God and the needs of others at the center it is a life that acknowledges God and uses who we are and all that we have for the glory of God for the progress of God's kingdom and for the good of God's people that is what it means to be rich toward God and that is a true life of discipleship as I invite you this morning as we go into prayers to search your heart and let God renew your heart amen this digital audio file along with many others is available from the st.

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john's shaughnessy we hope that this message has helped you and that you will share it with others you you you you