

# Parable of the Rich Fool

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Date: 18 July 2004

Preacher: The Venerable Daniel Gifford

[ 0 : 00 ] As we stand, let us pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for the good news of Jesus. And we ask that as we hear your word, that we would be able to trust our lives to him.

Father, help us as we listen to be rich towards you. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Please be seated. Well, if you have your Bibles open to that parable that was just read, you see a rich man who experienced a sudden change of fortunes.

And coincidentally, yesterday's papers, I was reading the National Post, the front had a huge picture of Martha Stewart. And on top of it said, the day of reckoning.

And a lot of the paper was devoted to her. In fact, there was a Martha section that was two full pages long. And the next section was the World News section, which was also two pages long.

And there was this huge amount of information about what had happened to Martha Stewart. Now, the question is, why was the media so fascinated by her?

[ 1 : 25 ] Why are we fascinated? Well, it's because here's a very wealthy woman who experienced a sudden change of fortunes. So much so that she's going to prison for five months.

And she could not... She was somebody who had her life completely under control, it would seem. She was completely secure. And she was very, very wealthy by the world's standards.

She could not have guessed, though, that two and a half years ago, one phone call would change her life and bring her, as she described it, two and a half years of suffering and then complete loss of control of her life for five months.

Now, this is the kind of story that Jesus told in our Bible passage today. It's about a day of reckoning. He tells it so that we put our trust in the right place.

The rich man in the story that Jesus tells is very much like Martha Stewart. He has as secure a future as the world can give. But in the ultimate way, the object of this man's trust is taken away in an instant.

[ 2 : 38 ] And so this parable, in a very powerful way, it causes us to ask the question, where do we put our trust? Where do we place our security?

And it reveals to us the human condition that probably the most common place for us to put our trust is in material possessions. And that desire to do that, that trust in material possessions, is so powerful that it can distort the gospel.

It can cloud us from seeing the good news of Jesus Christ. And we see that as the introduction of the parable comes, because the reason Jesus tells the story is because he's been talking about great spiritual truths to a crowd.

And he has talked about how his authority is the same as God's own authority. Extraordinary things for somebody to say. And there's a man in the crowd who's listening to all of this, and all of a sudden he gets this bright idea.

Here's a man with authority. I'll tell Jesus to tell my brother to split the inheritance with me. His brother would have gotten a double portion because he was older. So this guy is getting his money, but he wants the additional money from his brother.

[ 3 : 57 ] And he wants to use Jesus' power to champion his cause, to get what he wanted. And so you see what his difficulty is. His mind and his heart is so taken over by the desire to want more wealth and more security that he cannot see that Jesus is God himself before him.

And simply saw Jesus as another one that can help him in accomplishing his own purposes. And that's why Jesus rebukes him so strongly and says, man, who made me judge and divider over you?

In other words, do you have authority over me? And he warns the crowd. He tells them, you are in grave spiritual danger. All of you.

And he says it by verse 15 saying, take heed. And to say take heed is to say that this situation is extremely serious.

And he's saying, guard yourself against spiritual danger. And the danger, he says, is covetousness. And that's a word that actually means all kinds of greed, of desiring more.

[ 5 : 11 ] And he says, for a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions. You see, Jesus is saying you cannot find real life in your possessions.

And of course, in that culture, and most certainly in our culture, it strikes at the heart of what is preached around us. You and I are inundated by messages and images that tell us that life does consist in the abundance of your possessions.

That you must trust yourself to produce this life and work hard to acquire the things that will make it happen. man. And so, because we as humans are so susceptible to this misplace of trust, Jesus tells the story.

And it's a story that is used as a warning. Look at the parable in verse 16. The land of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully.

and there's a result of this. You know, this is probably the result of a lot of hard work by this man. A lot of things went into making sure that this happened.

[ 6 : 26 ] But the side effect is that this man in the process has a trust that's firmly fixed on what he has acquired and his ability to acquire it.

And the side effect is a self-centered life. Look at 17 through 18. It's completely about me and my. Look at how many times he says I and my. He thought to himself, what shall I do? For I have nowhere to store my crops. He said, I will do this. I will pull down my barns and build larger ones and there I will store all my grain and my goods.

Well, Jesus is telling the story in a way that emphasizes his purpose is in telling us here is the thoughts of a man who has become completely independent from God in his mind.

God does not enter the picture. only that man and his possessions. And there's an anxiety in this man as well that comes with it. He wonders, what about the future?

[ 7 : 35 ] You know, there's a great burden for him who has misplaced this trust. He worries about the future and that's why he builds large barns and he says at the end, ah, I'm secure.

You have ample goods, soul, laid up for many years. take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry. You see, his great accomplishment is to secure his own future.

Now, Jesus is not teaching us not to prepare for the future, not to have retirement plans or investing. He's telling us do not in that process misplace your trust from a trust in God to a trust in those material possessions.

and often the flag for us if this is happening in our life is when we worry and are anxious about the future. It's no accident that if you look at the very beginning of this parable and the end, there are two teachings of Jesus and they both have to do with anxiety.

So, verses 11 and 12 talk about spiritual anxiety. Don't be anxious about what you say for the Holy Spirit will teach you. And then in verse 22, if you jump just past the parable, he says to his disciples, don't be anxious about your life, what you shall eat, nor about your body, what you shall put on.

[ 9 : 04 ] You see, he's commanding us to turn away from trusting in one's abilities or one's possessions and to turn to the one who is the Lord of the future, who is the giver of every good thing.

Jesus is calling us in those two teachings surrounding this parable to replace a false trust with the right trust, the Lord of our future.

He owns our lives and he sustains our world, but our world is in massive denial about this. Now, that denial is shattered in verse 20 because the story has been completely about a rich man and his possessions.

No God. But suddenly, God speaks and he says, fool, your soul is required of you. Today is the day of reckoning.

And at that point, the man finally sees that his soul isn't his at all's. It is God's. And by extension, his barns and crops and land, all of it is God's as well.

[ 10 : 15 ] And God says, those things that you have prepared, whose will they be? Well, it's anybody's but his. And it's a sobering end to the parable and reminds us that any trust in the abundance of possessions will always fail.

It will always fail. Death will always break that trust. The only trust that is secure is in the Lord of our souls.

Now, I don't know how many of you, I said a prayer when I was growing up. And it's a prayer that apparently has been changed a bit because it talks about death.

And you don't want to talk to kids about death before they go to sleep. But you probably know this prayer. I must have said it for ten years at least. It said, now I lay me down to sleep.

I pray you, Lord, my soul to keep. If I die before I wake, I pray you, Lord, my soul to take. That is a great prayer because what that does is what the last part of the parable does.

[ 11 : 22 ] It pours cold water on any illusion that we can control the future by acquiring wealth. And instead, it replaces it with a strong trust in God to take care of our souls.

It says that God is the Lord of our future. That God is the one that we can put our trust in. And so I want to close the sermon with the last verse of this passage because Jesus sums up the message of this parable and the situation of the rich man.

And he says, this is the situation of anyone who lays up treasure for themselves and is not rich towards God.

You know, that is a brilliant way to end because anyone listening to Jesus will ask then, what does it mean to be rich towards God? What will it take to be rich to God?

And so it's an ending that calls each of us to action as well this morning. You know, I've heard the danger of putting my trust in my possessions.

[ 12 : 32 ] So how can I be rich towards God? You know, it's an important question because we are poor towards God in Vancouver. Archbishop Malango, I hope that you were able to meet him when he visited us twice.

But he came to Vancouver from Malawi. one of the poorest countries in Africa. And his first impression, he said, when he landed in Vancouver, is that here is a place that is poor towards God. That has an extreme poverty towards God. Even though there is wealth that surrounds us, there is a poverty towards God. And Jesus is teaching us we need to develop our wealth towards God.

And that's a wealth that actually comes very simply in being obedient to God in our lives. Because in our obedience to God we are storing up a wealth that will continue into heaven.

It will be about things that will be the life of heaven. And I think probably the best way to describe it is verse 35.

[ 13 : 41 ] If you jump down, Jesus says, I'm sorry, I got the... Yeah, it says in verse 32, fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

To give you the kingdom. And he has said that what it means to be wealthy towards God is to seek first the kingdom of God.

Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and you will receive everything else. And so when you think about it, you know, the acts of love that you do, when you introduce people to the Lord of our souls, when you financially support the mission of meeting, of serving God, God, when you praise and pray to God, when you serve God in many ways, these are things that don't have an expiry date.

These are not things that can be taken away. They're not things that will fade away either. Instead, we will see people in heaven who have responded to the gospel.

We will know the love of God to one another in heaven. We will see God's word fulfilled in heaven. And we will praise him with songs of joy and serve him in the adventure of a new life.

[ 15 : 08 ] These are treasures in heaven and they are things that we are actually about as we serve God. It's what it means to be rich to God. And so our prayer is today, God, help us by your Holy Spirit, help us to be rich towards the one who is the Lord of our souls, who is the one who is perfectly trustworthy, to the one that we place our lives into.

In Jesus' name, Amen.