

# Be Rich Toward God

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[ 0 : 00 ] Turn, if you will, to page 70 in the New Testament section of your pew Bible. Read again with me the parable which has just been read for us in the Gospel for the day.

And that begins on in verse 6. It is... It is... Parable New Testament.

Which only parables have. When you've concluded reading it, I want you to know that you have read a parable.

The unique thing of which is that when you put your Bible back in the pew and go home, the parable will still be with you.

It's described as the pictures. The pictures, you know how as children, and perhaps still, you don't like reading books, but you like looking at the pictures.

[ 1 : 10 ] This is a picture. This is a picture. And the picture you can remember where pages and pages of text you may forget. So this is the picture.

And we'll read it all together. And you can add all the embellishments you like as we read together. Nobody will notice. And you can add all the embellishments you like as we read together.

And you can add all the embellishments you like as we read together. And you can add all the embellishments you like as we read together.

And you can add all the embellishments you like as we read together. And you can add all the embellishments you like as we read together. And you can add all the embellishments you like as we read together. And I will say to my soul, soul, you have made ample good.

Take your ease, eat, drink, be merry. But God said to him, fool, this night your soul is required of you.

[ 2 : 14 ] And the things you have prepared, so is he who takes some treasure from his son and is not rich towards God.

So that the possibility of your understanding this parable and taking it home with you could mean that you leave this church this morning infinitely richer than you came in.

Far, far richer. And you may not think that a very exciting invitation because it almost gives you the warning to say to yourself, I've heard this before.

But I want to tell you that the peculiar nature of a parable is that it's like a bomb planted in your car. Sort of tuned to go off once you start the engine. Now the engine in this case is thoughtful reflection.

[ 3 : 19 ] Anybody can handle a parable as long as it doesn't induce thoughtful reflection. Once it does that, then it's liable to blow up and destroy you and the whole structure of your life.

So it's only in that sense you and people in Jesus' day knew how to hear the parables without paying any attention to them, whatever. And I think we are no less able than they.

But the possibility is that it may blow up in your face and I pray God it might. Now look at it this way.

The picture is of a rich man who's making a lot of money. Now that's not a very unusual picture, is it? I mean you can see it on any street in this town any time of day.

The only thing that rich men really don't like is other rich men. But there's so many of them in this town it's boring.

[ 4 : 24 ] Oh, I might just add at this point there's something to remember. I am a very rich man.

I probably have an income in the top 10% of the whole world. Think of that.

So that I think this is an important statement. In terms of material wealth and prosperity.

I am a very rich man indeed. I still am a little annoyed by people who are richer, but I still... I recognize it from...

So in order to look at this story there's nothing uncommon about it. He made money, he built bigger barns. His great ambition in life, which is an ambition you see reflected easily every day, is to take

your ease, to eat, drink and be merry, on into the unforeseeable future.

[ 5 : 37 ] To eat, drink and be merry. To take your ease, to eat, drink and be merry. And so the story is one that is so familiar that you can carry it around with you without it doing you any harm at all.

But it's meant to do you great harm. It's meant ultimately to crash your whole kingdom down around your ears and leave you destitute.

In one sense. Because the Gospel of Luke is written to the destitute people. The poor.

And it purposes to bring you to that place. In order that you might become very rich. If you want to know how the parable gets to us, it's been translated into our language by people who look at certain manuscripts, and they take these manuscripts to reflect as clearly as possible what Luke was trying to say.

And Luke put the manuscripts together, or the manuscripts from which the manuscripts were taken that we are reading. And Luke was putting down what he heard that Jesus had taught from those who told him about it, from the apostolic witness.

[ 7 : 06 ] He was told the story. And the apostolic witness heard it. That is the disciples from Jesus himself. So he told the story.

And Jesus concern in telling the story was to tell about a kingdom. And that kingdom was the kingdom of God. And so if you want to understand this story, you've got to begin where the parable begins.

And that's with God. See, if you just begin with rich men and barns and all those kinds of things, you'll never discover what it's about.

But if you follow it back, you'll find that it leads you back to God himself and to an understanding of who he is.

You see, the difficulty about this story is, and I can tell you that you might be the one about whom this story is written.

[ 8 : 09 ] And you might share exactly what he experienced. And that is, that though he played the central role in the story, he didn't know what it was about.

He was the central figure, and yet he didn't understand what the story was about. That's the rich man in his story. And you may be playing a central role in another story, which is the story of your life.

And equally, you may have no understanding of what it's all about. Well, Jesus said to him, you fool. You might become indignant because the Beatitudes tell us that he that calls his brother a fool is due for hellfire. But Jesus quite boldly calls this man a fool, but he uses an entirely different word. What he's calling him a fool for is because he has lived his life without reflection or intelligence. And in calling him a fool, Jesus says, you have intelligence, you have the capacity for reflection, and you haven't exercised it.

[ 9 : 40 ] That's why you're a fool. When you're guilty of hellfire for calling your brother a fool, that is to say to him, he hasn't got any capacity for reflection or intelligence, which is a very different statement.

This man did. And Jesus calls him a fool. Jesus characterizes this fool by certain key words, which you know.

If you look through the story, you'll see that it talks about I, I, I, my, my, my. All those words are there. Five my's.

My crops, my grain, my barns, my goods, my soul. So you get a clear picture of who he is and what's at the center of his life.

All that. He was right when he said my crops. And he was right when he said my barns. My barns. And he was right when he said my grain. And he was right when he said my goods.

[ 10 : 54 ] But he was wrong when he said my soul, because it didn't belong to him. And the end of the story is that on that very night, the one to whom it did belong required it of him.

And laid claim to it. And he thought it was his. He understood the things that belonged to him. But his soul was not among them.

And it was required of him by him to whom it did belong. Your life is something that is given to you. And it may be required of you.

But it doesn't belong to you. It's helpful when you know that. So, Jesus tells the story of this fool who thought his soul belonged to himself.

He says that he had good land and good crops and they led to great wealth. There was, if there was no good land and no rain and no crops, how quickly he would have organized to arrange for a subsidy.

[12:16] But there was good land and there was good rain and there was, as a result, good sunshine and good crops.

But why didn't he complain to God? I hear it often enough, and I know you hear it often enough.

Why did God let this happen?

Some tragedy has overtaken us and our minds and hearts are filled with the injustice of an uncaring God.

And in our defiance we cry to him from our hearts, why did he let it happen? And you can fill in the personal details of that story from your own experience time and time again.

And this is another aspect of the story. Here was a man on whom every possible blessing had been conferred.

[13:20] He had wealth, he had lands, he had crops, he had every resource, humanly speaking, that was possible to him. And then there was more.

More than he could handle. Why didn't he shake his fist at God and said, I've had enough, I don't want any more. I don't want to build new barns.

I don't want to be responsible for all this wealth. Why do you keep pouring it on me? Give it to somebody else, I've got all I want. Why didn't he get mad?

He didn't get mad because he was subject to a particular and peculiar disease that didn't allow him to get mad.

The disease, we think, is called covensism. And the symptom of that disease is an insatiable greed to have more.

[14:32] And more, and more, and more. And nothing would satisfy him. No matter how much he had, he still wanted more.

And he never came to the point where he said, God, that's enough. He still wanted more. And that's why Jesus said to him, you fool.

What he did, you see, with this coming in, this increasing wealth and better crops each year, and his barns were inadequate and his staff was inadequate and he didn't have, he needed more land. And the more and more and more and more he began to build and build and build all around him. Because he had this great ambition of what he wanted to do with his life. And he knew what it was. What I want to do with my life is I want to take my ease to eat, to drink, and to be merry.

[15:41] Not because tomorrow I die. But because I see endless tomorrow stretching out into the future. And endless opportunities to take my ease and to eat and to drink.

And to go on and on. That's what he said. That's what he was out to do. But he didn't recognize that the same disease that demands more and more and more is a crippling disease.

It robs you of the capacity to take rest. You can't sleep at night. Because of your anxieties.

It robs you of the capacity to eat. You develop an ulcer. Your doctor tells you you can't drink anymore. Because with your blood pressure you're like a time bomb.

Waiting to go on. And being merry gives you a headache. And so this is the bind that he's in.

[16:51] And that's why Jesus justifiably calls him a fool. And he concludes the story by saying.

This night your soul is required of you. And the things you have prepared whose will they be? Well there's a simple logic to that. You know that we make it and somebody else uses it.

But that's not all that Jesus is teaching. Somebody and I can't remember who. And maybe somebody in this congregation who told me a week ago a story about. A young grandson crawling up on his grandfather's knee.

And saying granddad when are you going to become a frog? He said what do you mean? And the story goes.

Well mom and dad were talking at lunch today. And they said they were going to Hawaii as soon as you broke. Thank you.

[17:59] Well. Well. There's a.

There's that sort of strange acquisition of things. Of more and more.

And I wish that. You know I think that what we're talking about is. Is about us. You know not just individually. But about us as a church.

We are so super saturated. With wealth of every kind. That it's time we complain to God.

And said. Lord we've had enough. We've got money. And we've got talent. And we've got gifts. And we've got people. And we've got real estate.

[ 19 : 01 ] And we've got every possible thing. That we could hope to have. As a congregation. And if all our homes could be put together on one piece of ground.

We would have probably the most exclusive subdivision in the world. We would be the envy of the world. We would be the envy of the world. We have been given so much. And it's time. That we thought about it.

And started to complain. And say. Lord we can't use anymore. What are we going to do with it? How are we going to dispose of it?

Who can we unload it on? And that's I think what stewardship is.

Is recognizing that as we acquire so much. In every worldly sense of wealth.

[ 20 : 04 ] That somehow. We're at the center of a story. That we don't understand any longer. We have to find some way.

Of dealing with it. Jesus says to this man. This night your soul will be required of you. Now what he means. I don't think is that the man was going to have a heart attack.

In the middle of the night. Or anything drastic like that. I think he recognized that. You have to come up against the fact of the reality of the judgment of God.

We're to be judged. There's no escape for any of us from judgment. How we have used what we've been given.

We have to face that fact. And there's no use fudging the figures. And there's no good doing what this man did. Refusing to think about it.

[ 21 : 05 ] Refusing to recognize it. Refusing to recognize the great abundance in the midst of which we live. British Columbia is the most fantastic place in the world.

In many ways. In terms of material wealth. The very success of Expo. Is a great attraction to the world.

To look with covetousness at us. And all that we have. In this province. And in this city. We have a great deal. But we are to be judged.

As to what we're going to do with it. We're going to come to the point where like the rich fool. We're not going to be able to sleep at night. We're not going to be able to eat all there is to eat.

To drink all there is to drink. And to live. To live. To be merry. As the end purpose of our existence.

[ 22 : 11 ] That's going to pause. It's not going to. It's not going to be attractive anymore. We're going to be fed up to the teeth with it. We don't want anymore. It's going to turn sour on us.

And that judgment you see. God has given us all this. And what are we to do with it? Well. Jesus doesn't leave us condemned.

As. I would like to. Because that's what preachers like doing. He goes on and he says. There is. There is. The possibility. The possibility. In the last three letters. Three words of this parable. Of being. Rich. Toward God.

That's where your riches is to be. That's why the story goes on and says. Be anxious for nothing. Consider the ravens. Consider the ravens. From which we get the word craving.

[ 23 : 15 ] And ravenous. That's what covetousness becomes. A kind of craving ravenous disease. That consumes us. But if you look at the ravens.

They don't build barns. And yet they're provided for. And if you look at the lilies. They're more beautifully clothed than Solomon.

And you're to be anxious for nothing. Because your true riches. Is riches towards God. Do you know who you are?

Who we are? Let me tell you from James chapter 2. And verse 5. Where it says. Listen my beloved brethren. Has not God chosen those who are poor in the world.

To be rich in faith. And heirs of the kingdom. Which he's promised to those who love him. Your inheritance. Is in your relationship to God.

[ 24 : 20 ] Not at some distant time. But right now. This parable talks. Not just about treasures in heaven. Where moth and rust doesn't corrupt. It talks about right now.

Living in such a way. That you are rich towards God. Rich in that relationship to God. In Timothy chapter 6 at the end.

It says more about it. When it says. When it says. As for the rich in this world. Charge them. And that's what this man was.

You see. He was rich in this world. And it says. Charge them not to be haughty. Nor to set their hopes on uncertain riches. But on God. Who richly furnishes us. With everything to enjoy. They are to do good. To be rich in good deeds. Liberal and generous. Thus laying up for themselves. A good foundation for the future. So that they may take hold.

[ 25 : 22 ] Of the life. Which is life indeed. Compare that with eat, drink and be merry. To taking hold of life. Which is life indeed.

That's that. The choice that we're involved with. That's the situation that we. That we have to. We have to. Think about.

You know. On this Thanksgiving. Harvest Thanksgiving. Let's complain to God. About the riches that he's poured. Upon us.

Say we want no more of it. You know what I mean. I don't want you to give up. Anything. You can do what you like. But. If we could just see the superficiality. Of.

Of our. Of our way. If we could just see that. And see that it's possible to be rich. Towards God.

And. If we could just see that. And see that it's possible to be rich.

[ 26 : 22 ] Towards God. And see that it's possible to be rich. Towards God. That that riches would pervade. The whole of our life. And in that riches.

We wouldn't be laying hold of something. Which ultimately will slip through our fingers. And we will find ourselves empty. And bereft. But we will be laying hold on life. Which is life. Indeed. We will be laying hold on life.

Which is life. Indeed. We will grant that you can carry that parable away with you.

And it can lay in your life. A foundation. Of a kind of richness towards God. Which for you is a laying hold of life. Which is life indeed. And that it may be the antidote to the terrible disease.

Of moreness. So easily afflicts us. Amen. Amen. Let us pray.

[ 27 : 46 ] Let us pray. Let us pray. For now. Thank you. Let us pray. Let us pray. We are all together. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. We are all together.

Good to both. Thank you. Thank you. Good to both. Thank you. There is Jack and Jean McCloud. leave this province and this city, this church, to go off to New Caledonia this week.

Let us use their time of leaving as a reminder that we are all called to extend the church. Perhaps our first prayer today could be found on page 41 of the prayer book at the top.

Amen. So can we say together, Almighty God, who by thy Son, Jesus Christ, did give commandment to the apostles that they should go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

[ 29 : 20 ] Grant to us, whom thou hast called into thy church, a ready will to obey thy word and fill us with a hearty desire to make thy way known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen. Amen. And this province and this city are in the midst of an election campaign.

And there is a prayer. There is a prayer. Amen. Amen. You know, you are checking out the promise where it begins in the midst of an entireazonazon from YouTube, deep breathing sh ToroP God, which should read, the fiance singed hand PD?

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Week- ai You are worthy of honour ire Herrn Norm■ 9 As place