

The Fool

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- [0 : 00] Life is meant to be lived in a context, in a bracket. Here's our life, and there's a bracket that comes here, and a bracket that comes at the end.
- And if we live in the brackets, if we understand that our life is bracketed by these two doctrines, then we'll get it right, probably. Thank you.
- The message is from the April 1st, 2001 service at St. John's, Shaughnessy. The Reverend Steve James delivered his message from the book of Luke, the 12th chapter, verses 13 to 34.
- The title of the message is, The Fool. It is, again, so good to be with you. My second visit, again, where I'm returning in June for the Essentials Conference.
- So, it's been a great Vancouver year for us, and it's also wonderful that Rachel, my wife, is here as well. And she is thoroughly disinfected, so you are completely safe.
- [1 : 29] It is April Fool's Day today, and that is a great reason to look at the parable of the rich fool. Luke chapter 12, verse 13, page 70, in the back ends of your Bible.
- Very well worthwhile, very well worthwhile, picking it up and opening it. The parable of the rich fool. Now, this is not a story against wealth, per se.
- I have to confess that I was lent a car for this short time we are here. It's a BMW. And I spoke to Harry Robinson yesterday and said, Harry, I'm very worried.
- Is this going to be damaging to my soul? And Harry said, well, I'm just worried you're going to damage the BMW. So, that got that in perspective pretty quick.
- It hasn't changed. Verse 15, take heed and beware of all covetousness, for a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.
- [2 : 39] It's the section that leads into the story. I heard a story of a rich Texan who, many years ago, was being buried. And his burial lot was huge, enormous, because he was going to be buried in his Cadillac.
- And a large crowd gathered. He was lowered in. I'm not quite sure. I think he was driven in, I think. Rolled into his grave. And as he was rolled in, one of the crowd, one of the bystanders said to the other one, man, he said, that's living.
- Well, it isn't really, is it? It's dying. Well, something like that happens in the story of the rich fool. When the man dies, he's called foolish.
- The farmer in the story has a similar kind of experience. Tries to take it with him, but he can't. That farmer is doing a lot better than some of our farmers in the UK.
- But by any assessment, we'd say that the farmer of the story here, the rich man, is smart. He's obviously done well for himself. Man, is he living?
- [3 : 47] He's doing great. But Jesus says, no. He's a fool. And the reason is a fool. He doesn't have everything. In fact, he actually has nothing to take with him.
- I don't mean just nothing in terms of possessions. I mean nothing in terms of his soul. Because his soul has been all emptied out. And there is nothing to bring before God.

A man's life does not consist in the abundance of his or her possessions. So what does life consist of?

What is life about? Well, that's an issue that many, many books have been written about. You have a bookstore here called Chapters. And I imagine if you went into it, you would find hundreds of books on what life is really about.

It's a wisdom issue. What is life about? And the Bible has got many books on what life is about. It has its own wisdom literature. Proverbs, some of the Psalms, Job, and Ecclesiastes that we have read today as well.

[4 : 59] But what marks out the biblical teaching on wisdom about how to live your life is that life is meant to be lived in a context. That is, in a bracket.

Here's our life, and there's a bracket that comes here, and a bracket that comes at the end. And if we live in the brackets, if we understand that our life is bracketed by these two doctrines, then we'll get it right, probably.

But these are the two doctrines about which we are most embarrassed. The doctrine of creation, and the doctrine of a final reckoning, a judgment.

Creation? Well, if you hold that in a university or a school, you're reckoned as antediluvian in some way.

Judgment, a final reckoning? Well, we're not allowed to make any judgments at the moment. So, how dare anybody suggest that my life is answerable to anybody?

[6 : 07] You will have heard that. But if you take that away, then people have no context in which to understand how to live a life of wisdom. You see, creation will tell you who you are.

Tells you you're a child of God. And the final judgment will tell you where you're going, and that you are answerable for all that God has given you. That if you take it away, all you have is this life.

And that will lead to foolishness. Great foolishness. David and I were talking in the break, and imagining somebody up in a Sputnik, some kind of rocket or something, and the child had been born on the Sputnik, on the mere spacecraft, let's say.

The child doesn't know where he or she came from. The child does not know where he or she is going. I imagine that after about 10, 15 years of that, that child is just desperate to throw themselves out, because they have no meaning or purpose or sense of where their lives are going.

Well, this morning, I'm not going to tell you how you should live your life. I'm going to let the chapter do it for you.

[7 : 34] Because in the chapter, I believe, Jesus shows us that your own life will tell you what you think life is all about. Your own life will reveal to you what your life is all about.

Our passage starts with a prayer. It's a man in a crowd who shouts out to Jesus, and asks him something, which we do most every day, and we call that praying.

But it's a prayer where the man has already decided the outcome and the right result. Jesus, tell my brother. Tell my brother he's got to share the land.

Ever prayed a prayer like that? I'm going to save you some time, Lord Jesus. You've got so many things to think about. So I'll tell you the right outcome for what I'm asking.

Is that okay with you? Well, the actual issue is a dispute over land. The father would die and sell the land.

[8 : 38] Sorry, give the land to his family. And to keep it together, it would be worth more together. The brothers would live together and work the land. But there was a law that said if you didn't like your brother or got on with him, you could have your own bit and take it away at the cost of the relationship to your brother.

And Jesus says, man, why did you make me a divider? I've come to reconcile people. You're trying to force me into a role of separating people that I've come to bring together.

I can see, I can detect a virus here, greed and covetousness. You don't know who you are and you don't know where you're going.

And so what you want takes you over. I love quick answers to prayer, but I wouldn't like this answer. It's a rough treatment, isn't it? I can see what your life is all about.

Your praying will reveal to you what your life is all about. It's not that you can't pray about anything or ask God for anything. And if you have a genuine loving concern for someone, you're bound to pour out your heart for them.

[9 : 47] But when the thing takes on huge proportions and dominates your life or my life, and when we begin to say, I want you to do this.

This is what I want you to do. I'm putting my money in the slot machine, God. You deliver the answer. Then it tells us maybe that we've lost the right perspective on how to live life.

So Jesus tells a story. You can see there's this virus around of a man who is not living wisely. So he tells a story. And the story is of a rich man.

And the rich man had a good crop and there's nothing wrong with that. It's a gift. And then it all starts to go wrong. He has a storage problem. And so he talks to himself.

Says in the passage, he thought to himself and he said to himself. There was no discussion with any of the wider community.

[10 : 48] They might have put him right. No, he just kept the whole thing to himself. And then in his discussion with himself, he reveals what he thought his life was all about.

These are my prop. These are my barns. This is my life. This is my soul. Soul, what am I going to do? And then in his decision to build bigger barns, well, then there is revealed what he thought his life was all about.

Take life easy. That's what I want to do. I'm so stressed. I've been working so hard. I deserve it. I deserve to treat myself here. Yeah. This is what I really want.

Eat, drink and be happy. Recognize that. See, without the context of creation and a final reckoning, covetousness or greed or selfishness, well, that's all there is to live for.

And God says, you fool. You fool because you forgot creation you notice in the passage it says, the land of a rich man brought forth a good prop.

[12 : 19] The land of a rich man. It was a gift anyway. Your riches, your wealth are a gift from God. Be thankful. But they're not yours to hold on to.

They're yours to use for him. Because one day you will meet him at the end. And he will say, well, what happened? What did you do with everything I gave you?

This man doesn't even think there's an end to come. He's going to have many years of eating, drinking and making merry when in fact God says tonight.

It's very easy to my kids think they're eternal. I mean, they are in a sense eternal, but you know, they think they're never going to die. Especially my son.

The way he rides his bike. He's just passed his test. You know, we're really praying. They just don't think anything's going to happen to them. There's a story of Muhammad Ali many years ago.

[13 : 24] He was taking a flight and he sat in his seat and the attendant asked him to put his seatbelt on and he said to her, Superman don't need no seatbelt.

To which the attendant replied very quickly, yeah, well, Superman don't need no aeroplane either. We are mortal.

My father-in-law is ill. I know he will die and I know he will meet God and I know what God will say to him. You are answerable. You are answerable.

And God says, as he could say to any one of us tonight, your soul is required of you. That didn't belong to you anyway. I gave you that. So what have you done with it?

It sends a chill down your spine. It does mine. Remember the story of the people building the tower building the tower of Babel.

[14 : 30] They poured all of themselves into this huge tower that was going to reach up into the heavens. And why did they pour all of their life into this?

They did it because they wanted to make a name for themselves. they were self-namers. And as they poured all of their life and everything into Babel or Vancouver or anything, they were doing it because that was what they thought their life consisted of.

It doesn't, does it? God has given you a name. You're a child of God.

You have an identity. You have a future. You don't have to make a name for yourself. I know people in this church who've given up their name to become a Christian because the name that God gave them was a far better name and it went on into eternity.

It's not quite true when people say to you that you take nothing with you when you die. you take your soul with you. But you see what happens is what kind of soul do you take?

[16 : 09] You take a soul which is like a sponge where the eternity is squeezed out of it and the temporary is squeezed in so that all you have when you come to God is a life full of stuff that belong to now and nothing that belongs to eternity.

I don't know about you but I when I read this I automatically thought how am I going to manage living a life with eternity in mind?

There is so much stuff and that's what the passage goes on to talk about. Jesus is talking to the crowd but then he can hear the disciples the congregation if you like saying yeah but how does that work out?

And so he turns to his disciples in verse 22 and he says look don't worry I tell you do not be anxious about your life. You can imagine the disciples saying look I can't help it.

The things of this life they do absorb me. They absorb me so much they consume me. I cannot help but pray about such things. I cannot help but be absorbed by such things as my kids.

[17 : 25] They're good things you know. Kids are great but you can be absorbed by them consumed by them to the extent that you forget. You forget God and then you don't end up being a good parent.

Health not just your own but others you can be consumed by it. Job consumed by it I haven't got one some of you I know. Security my identity the scars I bring with me they consume me.

My history my pain I just want to withdraw. It consumes me. How can I live wisely? What are you saying to me Jesus?

And Jesus says I know I know I know you need all these things and they're all relevant to life but look just stop for a moment and consider consider the ravens they didn't do anything but God feeds them consider the lilies haven't done anything but God closed them I made them and they only last for a day and I take care of them I made you I will take care of you do not let these things consume you and so squeeze out of you what is really important anxiety needs to move to adoration acquisition needs to move to worship broaden your horizons look at the kingdom seek first the kingdom please pray for me

I will seek first the kingdom and then all these things will be yours as well I will take care of them but live lightly to those things they do not deserve to take your soul I had a story this week which you may have heard before a professor is speaking to his students and he has a one gallon container and he fills up the container with big rocks big rocks and he says to them is the container full and they say yeah it's full he says no it isn't he pours in some sand and the sand goes in down through the cracks and he says to them now is the container full they say yeah no he says no it's not full he gets some water and he pours the water into the gallon container until it really is full and then he says what would happen if I filled this container first with the sand and the water and they said you wouldn't be able to get the rocks in he said that's right put the big things in first the things that matter the kingdom things first and then all these other things will fit in around it

[20 : 56] I'm just well I'm I'm asking that you will live your life lightly for things and hugely and generously to God I know it's in this congregation because I've experienced it but you know when you stop doing it you know inside don't you that I'm impoverished inside I'm empty inside because all the eternity bits all squeezed out God made you your life is a gift so live lightly to it because you will give it all back and you will be answerable to him at the end now in two weeks time you'll hear the Easter story I want to tell you that the Easter story of the cross and resurrection of Jesus will not make sense to people unless you see it in the context of a God who made you and to whom you are answerable

Jesus coming and dying for you would just be very nice unless you feel how on earth am I going to be answerable to God how can I stand before him by the mercy of Jesus Christ through his death and through a life lived lightly to things but richly to God that is the way of joy that is the way of freedom and that is what life is all about GOOD and L That address is www.stjohns.org.

On the website you will also find information about ministries, worship services and special events at St. John's Shaughnessy. We hope that this message has helped you and that you will share it with others.

Thank you.