

The Parables of Jesus #22
The Parable of the Rich Fool
(Lk. 12:13-21)
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INTRODUCTION

A. A rich man learned that he would die in a few days. He called his three friends: a doctor, preacher, and lawyer to his bedside. He said, "The preacher has told me that you can't take it with you, but I believe I have worked out a way so that I can. Doc tells me that I won't live long, so I have prepared three sealed envelopes, each containing \$10,000. When I die, I want each of you to walk by the casket and drop in your envelope with the \$10,000."

A short time later, they attended his funeral and then met together. The preacher said, "I've got a confession to make. We've been needing repairs on the church building for a long time, and I took \$2,000 out of Bill's envelope and used it on the repairs." The doctor said, "This makes it easier for me, because I took \$5,000 out and used it for my new clinic and only dropped in \$5,000." The lawyer said, "Well, my conscience is clear. I did just what Bill said. I kept my envelope, picked up both of yours and dropped in a check for the whole amount of \$30,000." Many people have tried to take it with them, but all in vain. -- Robert Cargill

B. In 1923, nine of the world's most successful financiers met at Chicago's Edgewater Beach Hotel. Financially, they literally "held the world by the tail" - anything that money could buy was within their grasp -- they were rich -- rich -- rich! Read their names and the high position each held:

1. Charles Schwab, the president of the largest steel company.
2. Samuel Insull, the president of the largest electric utility company.
3. Howard Hopson, the president of the largest gas company.
4. Arthur Cutten, the great wheat speculator.
5. Richard Whitney, the president of the New York Stock Exchange.
6. Albert Fall, the Secretary of Interior in President Harding's Cabinet.
7. Jesse Livermore, the greatest "bear" on Wall Street.
8. Ivar Kreuger, head of the world's greatest monopoly.
9. Leon Fraser, president of the Bank of International Settlements.

A tremendously impressive group -- right? Would you like to change positions with one of them? Before you decide, let's look at the picture 25 years later -- in 1948:

1. Charles Schwab was forced into bankruptcy and lived the last five years before his death on borrowed money.
2. Samuel Insull not only died in a foreign land, a fugitive from justice, but was penniless.

3. Howard Hopson was insane.
4. Arthur Cutten became insolvent and had died abroad.
5. Richard Whitney had just been released from Sing Sing prison.
6. Albert Fall had been pardoned from prison so he could die at home -- broke.
7. Jesse Livermore had died a suicide.
8. Ivar Kreuger took his own life.
9. Leon Fraser also committed suicide.

Now, are you still impressed with this group? A vast amount of talent and potential went down the drain with these men. What happened? Their lives were out of balance!

C. This is a lesson we refuse to believe

1. It's not that wealth or possessions are wrong in themselves
 - a. some of world's greatest men (in God's eyes) were rich
 - b. Abraham - Job - David (just to name a few)
2. It's just that wealth or possessions must not define a person's life
 - a. material wealth doesn't say anything about the man
 - b. material wealth doesn't guarantee any of the things that make for a good life

D. Luke records a story Jesus told that makes this point well

1. Lk 12:1 -- a huge crowd gathered (so large they were trampling one another)
2. In the middle of discussing several serious matters, one in the crowd asked Jesus to speak to his brother and tell him to divide the inheritance with him
3. Instead of doing that, Jesus told a story that addressed the underlying problem of both brothers

I. THE PARABLE

A. A rich man gets richer

1. The man was already rich, but his farm produced plentifully
2. This was a man who already received his identity from his wealth

B. The big worldly question and the big worldly answer

1. "What will I do with all these crops?"
2. "Why, I'll just build bigger barns to store it."
3. The reason this is so important is that it emphasizes the fact that he already had all he needed and more -- all this was excess

C. The worldly conclusion

1. I'm on easy street now!
2. No worries, no problems, no want for anything
3. Eat, drink, be merry!
 - a. this is the self-sufficient man
 - b. this is the man who looks no further than himself
 - c. this is the man who believes he has provided all he needs
 - d. he believes his wealth has insured him of a life of ease and comfort

D. But God said to him

1. "You fool"
 - a. aphron ^{^878^} signifies "without reason" (a, negative, phren, "the mind"), "want of mental sanity and sobriety, a reckless and inconsiderate habit of mind" (Hort), or "the lack of commonsense perception of the reality of things natural and spiritual... or the imprudent ordering of one's life in regard to salvation" (G. Vos, in Hastings' Bible Dic.)
(from Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words)
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 - b. this is a rich man whose brain isn't working properly!!
2. "This night your soul will be required of you"
 - a. his soul -- his life, that which makes him who he is
 - b. he is going to die -- that night
 - c. he was prepared to live, but was he prepared to die?
 - d. he had wealth to pay for living, but could he pay his debt in death?
3. "Then whose will those things be which you have provided?"
 - a. in death, all his wealth counts for nothing
 - b. he cannot use it, spend it, depend on it

E. The point

1. Luke 12:21 -- So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. (NKJ)
2. There is a wealth we all need, but it doesn't have anything to do with material possessions or money
3. This is a wealth of relationship with God

II. LESSONS TO LEARN

A. The danger of self-centeredness

1. 11 times in vs 16-19 the words "I," "my" are used
 - a. though blessed, he did not acknowledge God as the provider
 - b. "my goods," "my crops," -- did not recognize God as owner
 - c. he was owed everything, but he owed God nothing
2. Selfishness led to extravagance
 - a. his sole purpose seems to be to live a life of ease
 - b. he thought only of himself
 - c. his only thoughts centered around his possessions
 - d. "bigger" and better was the goal of his life
3. Why is this dangerous -- it leaves one unprepared for death

B. The danger of covetousness

1. Defined -- a craving or desire for more; greediness and dissatisfaction with what is enough
2. It is a perverse lust that moves a person's desires away from God and onto material things
3. It is an insatiable appetite for things
4. Why is it so dangerous -- because it causes us to abandon God and to replace him with things

C. Countless verses in the Bible warn against the attitudes of the man in the story

1. Deut 8:11ff (read)
2. Matt 6:19-21

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (NKJ)
3. Matt 6:24

No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. (NKJ)
4. Matt 16:26

For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? (NKJ)

5. 1 Tim 6:7-11

For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. (NKJ)

D. The main lesson (cf. Lk 12:22-31)

1. The main lesson is that the greatest possession we can have is faith in God
 - a. to center our whole existence in him, not worldly goods
 - b. to entrust our life and well-being in the Lord
 - c. to rest all our anxieties in the sure provision of his hand
 - d. to find satisfaction for life in our relationship with God
2. The man who has faith in God is truly prepared for life
 - a. Rom 14:8-9

For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living. (NKJ)
 - b. Phil 1:21

For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. (NKJ)
 - c. only the man who believes in and follows God has that view of life and death

CONCLUSION

- A. They say you can't take it with you
 1. That's true if you're talking about material possessions and worldly riches
 2. It isn't true at all if you're talking about the riches of a relationship with God
- B. Only faith in God and in his son Jesus Christ can equip you for eternity
 1. Are you prepared?
 2. Are you trusting in things that are ultimately weak and useless
 3. Or do you have the assurance of God himself as your possession?
- C. Invitation