

## Parables: Jesus the Storyteller. The Rich Fool, Luke 12:13-21, 8/8/21

The context of this parable in Luke 12: Jesus is teaching a large multitude, like a mini-Bible college happening on the hillside.<sup>1</sup> Some guy busts into the sermon and asks for Jesus to settle a financial dispute between he and his brother. He was the younger brother and he believed his older brother was cheating him out of his father's estate. Now why would he ask Jesus to be his arbiter or make a judgment on money? Likely, because Jesus was constantly preaching about money, possessions- 11 out of 39 parables.<sup>2</sup> The reason Jesus spoke about money so often is because money is attached to our hearts. What we do with it, it's power in our lives, tells us about our hearts, what we really love and hope in. And so this man was trying to get Jesus to give one of his money sermons to his brother. He's trying to use Jesus to get his agenda. Now this man may have had a legitimate case. But Jesus sees the heart- the idol of greed in his heart. v.15- *life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.* And to show how true this is, Jesus gives us this parable

<sup>16</sup> *And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. <sup>17</sup> He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.'*

<sup>18</sup> *"Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. <sup>19</sup> And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.'"*

<sup>20</sup> *"But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?'"*

Now I'm going to start with the hypothesis that the struggle of the man in the crowd, and the man with rich fool is the same struggle of most Americans. We believe we can find life in the abundance of our stuff. It is part of the cultural air we breathe in the consumer driven world we live in. Where almost every advertisement is bent on convincing you that life consists of possessions...specifically their product.

[Blank Slide] *The Little Mermaid* song used to sell a new Apple product.

Look at this stuff, Isn't it neat, Wouldn't you think my collection's complete, Wouldn't think I'm the girl, The girl who has everything? Got gadgets and gizmos a-plenty, Got whositz and whatzits galore, You want thingamobs? I've got 20!, But who cares, no big deal, I want more... Up where they walk, up where they run, Up where they stay all day in the sun, Wandering free, wish I could be, Part of that world... brilliant marketing and a tragic worldview.

And yet we already are part of that world. I was speaking with an expert in consumer credit who told me that the number one thing people did with their stimulus checks- buy TVs and electronics...not pay off their debt, save the college, give to charity. I heard a pastor share a

<sup>1</sup> Lon Solomon's words from sermon on Luke 12:13-21.

<sup>2</sup> Tim Keller's observation from message on Luke 12:13-21.

story about a guy with a brand new Corvette who opened the door getting out on the street and a car drove by and tore it off the car door along with his arm. A police officer came over and the guy was wailing, "Oh, my car, oh, my beautiful car!" And the officer said, "What's wrong with you, man? Your left arm got torn off! The guy looks down to where his left arm was and says, "My Rolex! Oh, my Rolex!"<sup>3</sup> That's not a true story, but it could be...the world tells us that our life consists of the abundance of our money, our security, our possessions and we have largely bought that age old lie, which begun in the garden.

So let's explore this parable a little deeper. We call this man in the parable the rich fool- a bit of an oxymoron in Jesus' day because the wealthy were considered wise. After all they must have made all the right decisions, they must have worked hard, they must have had the favor of God if they were wealthy. And to some degree we still have this view. Rich equals wise. But one's financial success doesn't determine one's wisdom in God's eyes. You could be a rich fool or a poor wiseman. A fool in the Bible is someone who lives counter to God's reality.

**Proverbs 28:26** *Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom will be delivered.* The fool trusts his own desires, his own sense of morality, his own ambitions, his own decisions instead of God's wisdom. Don't care what God says about my sex life, how to treat people, etc.

That was the problem with this rich fool. Well just like the modern man- he trusted his own counsel, his own reasoning and feelings. Notice how he solves his dilemma. <sup>17</sup> *He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.'*<sup>18</sup> *"Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain.*

<sup>19</sup> *And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry."*

In the Greek the word "my" 4x and "I" 8x. He was his own financial advisor, his own life coach. There is no thought to what God would want him to do. No thought to what the word of God says. In his own foolish counsel led him to two grave errors.

### **#1 He thought life was found in material security and comfort.**

Notice how this man alleviated his worries- by comforting himself with the notion that his money and possessions will guarantee his security and the ability to live the good life. You know it's a sign of money sickness when you believe money will solve all your problems. "Early retirement and a life of ease resting on my past financial accomplishments! That's the good life, that's happiness." No thought of whether early retirement was the right choice, no thought of generosity to others, the needs of the world around him, no thought of family or people who may depend on him.

### **#2 He thought life was found only in what was momentary.**

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<sup>3</sup> J.D. Greear told this story in Luke 12:13-21 sermon.

**Psalm 14:1** *The fool says in his heart there is no God.* This man lives as if God, the afterlife, his spiritual life didn't exist. It seems as if he was only concerned about what would happen during the few short years he had on Earth, none of which are guaranteed. No sooner does he plan for early retirement, life is over. **v.20** *But God said to him, "You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?"* What a tragically wasted gift of life and abundance that God blessed him with. This story unfortunately doesn't have a happy ending. Not exactly the story you share with your kids before you tuck them in.

Monopoly- even after you crush your opponent, take all their money and all their property. It all goes back into the box. Same goes with each of us- no matter what we've accumulated in this life, it all goes back in the box. Jesus challenges us to live not as the fool but **the wise- The one who lives in accordance with God's reality.** In accordance to what God says about what life consists of and where to find it. How do we live like the wise? The wise...

### **#1 Find life in being rich toward God.**

**v.21** *This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.* If the fool is rich toward themselves, the wise find life in being rich toward God.

The good life is not found in money, possessions, a swollen bank account or the latest and greatest tech. In fact anyone who chases it will find that it does not satisfy the soul. Many find that they spent their whole life climbing the ladder of financial success only to find out that their ladder was leaning against the wrong building.<sup>4</sup> **Ecclesiastes 5:10** *He who loves money will not be satisfied with money nor he who loves wealth with his income.* You want to find true life? Be rich toward God. Be generous toward things that are eternal. What is eternal:

**v.31** *But seek first the kingdom of God.*

**The gospel is eternal.** Stands forever...invest your money and possessions in the work of proclaiming the saving message of Jesus Christ. Church, para-church, church planting, evangelism.

**V.33** *sell your possessions and give to the poor.*

**People are eternal.** We are made in the image of God with dignity, we should work toward ministries that work to restore the dignity of humanity. Our souls last forever. C.S. Lewis "There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations - these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub and exploit- immortal horrors or everlasting splendors." Being rich toward God through the spread of the gospel and investment in people marked the early church. In a **Letter to Diognetus-** "They share their table with all, but they don't share their bed with all. They are poor, yet they make many rich; they are completely destitute, and yet they enjoy complete abundance."<sup>5</sup>

I want to read you a list and I want you to imagine how much you think it would all cost.

<sup>4</sup> From a cover story in an unknown magazine.

<sup>5</sup> [https://earlychurchtexts.com/public/epistle\\_to\\_diognetus.htm](https://earlychurchtexts.com/public/epistle_to_diognetus.htm)

- Sponsor 1M new indigenous full-time missionaries in poor nations around the world
- Completely fund the fight against global malaria
- Quadruple the global missions budget of all missions agencies engaged in reaching unevangelized nations
- Provide food, clothing, and shelter to all 6.5 million refugees across Africa, Asia, and the Middle East
- Triple the global Bible translation budget
- Fund 150,000 seminary scholarships for promising students in emerging economies
- Double the operating budget of Compassion caring for Orphans
- Establish eight new Christian universities around the world
- Hire 25,000 additional American missionaries to work on our college campuses

What do you think the price tag on that would be? It could all be accomplished if the Christian community in America gave just .4 percent more of its income—1 more dollar out of every \$250—to work in the Kingdom of God!<sup>6</sup>

### **The Wise...#2 Find their Best Life in the Next Life.**

<sup>32</sup> Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. <sup>33</sup> Sell your possessions and give to the poor.

Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. <sup>34</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

### **1 Timothy 6:18-19**

<sup>18</sup> Command the wealthy to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. <sup>19</sup> In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

We have two bank accounts, one temporal and one eternal. Throughout your life you are making deposits in one or the other. Every act of obedience with money to God is a deposit. Every act of helping others, giving to the work of God, for the advancement of his kingdom.

### **Which bank account are you swelling the most?**

So maybe that means you sell some stuff. Give more of your income. Make a budget and see what you actually need. “Well that’s radical...” That’s no more radical than believing that Jesus rose from the dead. The same word of God that says that says we should be radical with our money because the treasure in heaven is worth it. Bottom line is to I really believe God? Only regret we will have in heaven is that we haven’t given more.<sup>7</sup>

**[Blank Slide]** Passion Conference, 2000. Freshman in college. Dr. John Piper told a story that shaped my generation of pastors, missionaries, future businessmen and women, young

<sup>6</sup> *God and Money*, Cortines and Baumer, 106.

<sup>7</sup> Helpful idea from Lon Solomon.

Christians to completely rethink their goals in life. He looked at a crowd of nearly 40,000 college students and told this story. He said, “Three weeks ago we got word at our church that Ruby Eliason and Laura Edwards had both been killed in Cameroon,” he began. “Ruby was over eighty. Single all her life, she poured it out for one great thing: to make Jesus Christ known among the unreached, the poor, and the sick. Laura was a widow, a medical doctor, pushing eighty years old, and serving at Ruby’s side in Cameroon. The brakes failed, the car went over the cliff, and they were both killed instantly. And I asked my people: Was that a tragedy?” “No,” Piper responded. “That is not a tragedy. But I’ll tell you what is.”

He then pulled out a page from Reader’s Digest and read, “Bob and Penny took early retirement from their jobs in the Northeast five years ago when he was 59 and she was 51. Now they live in Punta Gorda, Florida, where they cruise on their 30-foot trawler, play softball, and collect shells.” He continued: “The American Dream: come to the end of your life—your one and only life—and let the last great work before you give an account to your Creator be, ‘I collected shells. See my shells.’ “That, I submit to you, is a tragedy. People today are spending billions of dollars to persuade you to embrace that tragic dream. Today I’m here to plead with you: don’t buy it. Don’t waste your life.”

Jesus’ life would have looked like a great tragedy to many today. He lived poor, never started a business, had no children, no nest-egg, he died in his prime. But every hour, every minute, every second of his life was spent seeking first the kingdom of God for you and me.

Life does not consist of the abundance of possessions but the abundance of Christ.