

# The rich fool

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[ 0 : 00 ] Now let us turn to Luke chapter 12, verse 21. Luke 12, verse 21. So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

This is the parable of the rich fool, and we were talking about this parable a fortnight ago, when I was with you here. Now I would like us to look at some of the lessons that we can still learn from this parable, because it's the Lord speaking to us, and there are lessons that we must learn from the parable. Why did Jesus speak this parable? Well, he spoke it because there was a man there, and he knew that he was going to share an inheritance with his brother.

And as Jesus was preaching on the most profound themes, such as God and the work of the Holy Spirit, heaven and hell, and matters of that nature, suddenly our Lord was interrupted in the flow of his sermon by this man who said to Jesus on the spur of the moment, Lord, he said, tell my brother to share the inheritance with me.

And you see, you can almost see the whole situation. Here is Christ, and he is preaching one of those wonderful sermons. And here is this man, and instead of listening to what the sermon is all about, he is thinking of wealth. He is thinking of prosperity. He is thinking of how he can get on in life, and how much wealth would help him in his self-aggrandizement. And so he's not really interested in God.

He is not interested in the work of the Holy Spirit. He is only interested in himself. And that is why he makes this interruption. And he says to Jesus, Lord, he says, tell my brother to share the inheritance with me. And Jesus says to a man, he says, who made me a judge or a divider over you? That's got nothing to do with me at this moment. These are matters that are relevant to yourself. And so Jesus tells him this story of this rich farmer. And he says to this man, consider this rich farmer. All that he was interested in was interested in was himself. He was going to pull down his barns and build greater.

[ 2 : 58 ] He was going to take his ease, his retirement. He was going to enjoy himself. And you see, what Jesus has been talking about is this, the conceit that can come with success. And here was a farmer who was successful. But with his success, there was nothing but conceit. Oh, there was unhindered progress.

But along with the unhindered progress, as he made his way through life, there was self-egoism. And Jesus emphasizes that when he tells us the man said, he thought within himself saying, what shall I do?

This will I do. I will pull down my barns. I will build greater. And the emphasis you see is on the personal pronoun. It's what he is going to do. It's his self-egoism that is coming out in this vain ambition of his. And Jesus would seem to be saying to this dissatisfied brother, see that you're not like that. Just thinking of what you're going to do, how you're going to succeed.

And then not only that, but with regard to that rich farmer that Jesus speaks about, there were, there was his pride of possessions. He speaks of my barns, my fruits, my goods. If he had only remembered what it says in Ecclesiastes, he came into the world naked, and he was going to go out of the world naked.

And that all the goods that he had, all these things that he thought were his, were ultimately God's. And so he is expressing, you see, this pride of his possessions.

[ 5 : 05 ] But I want us now to move on to consider the man's vain ambition, because this is again what Jesus underlines in this story that he tells to this disenchanted brother, this vain ambition of the man.

Now, you know, there is nothing wrong with ambition in itself. It is when ambition is motivated only towards oneself and when it has excluded God, that is when ambition can be so wrong.

After all, it's right to be ambitious for God. It is right to be ambitious for a life of consecrated living. It is right for us to be ambitious for the cause of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. But if we are only interested in ambition in order to fulfill our own self-aggrandizement, if my ambitions are only towards my pleasures, if my ambitions are only for my own glory, then that is surely wrong and sinful.

And that, you see, is what was basically wrong with this rich farmer that Jesus talks about. What is he going to do?

[ 6 : 44 ] I will pull down my barns and build greater. The tragedy of the man was in keeping all this wealth for himself to the exclusion of God and the kingdom of God.

And as someone has put it, here is a man who cares more for a patch of earth than for the kingdom of heaven.

Think of that. He cares more for a patch of earth than for the kingdom of heaven. There is the kingdom of heaven with all that the kingdom of heaven conjures up for us.

And instead of wanting that, this man is wanting a paltry piece of earth in this world. That was his ambition.

And my friend, before we're too hard on the rich farmer that Jesus speaks about, isn't that the trouble in our present-day society, that there is this continual preoccupation with material things?

[ 8 : 09 ] It's in us all. This insatiable desire within us for increased prosperity. And it can become so true in your life and in my life that if we are not actually pulling down our barns to build greater ones, we've got dreams of doing so.

Oh, this is our great dream. We haven't yet reached the attainment that we want to reach, and so we're thinking about pulling down these small barns of ours that are too small for us, and we're going to build greater ones.

Well, is that what you feel like today? And you're not thinking of Christ, and you're not thinking of the kingdom of God. Well, listen to Jesus.

In his great sermon on the mount, this is what he had to say, Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.

But this man wasn't thinking of the kingdom of God. This man wasn't thinking about the righteousness of heaven. He was only thinking of himself.

[ 9 : 44 ] And he was going to pull down his barns for himself and build greater ones. And even although the man replaced his existing barns with greater ones, do you think he would be satisfied?

Of course he wouldn't. Because after having built greater barns, he would still think again, later on, that he would pull even these down and build still greater barns.

You see how wise the writer of Ecclesiastes was. We were reading part of what he had to say this morning. And you recall what we read this morning where that writer says, He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver, nor he that loveth abundance with increase.

And oh, this is so true in our own experience and we've seen it in the experience of other people.

And as soon as the bank balance is looked at, we are wondering how can we increase it?

As soon as we acquire something that is there in our hearts to beautify our homes or whatever else it may be that we've got, we're thinking of something else. You see, as the writer tells us, He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver.

[ 11 : 28 ] If you love antiques, then you'll not be satisfied with the present antiques you've got.

You'll be wanting more of them. If you love jewelry, you'll not be satisfied with the jewelry that adorns you now.

You'll be wanting more of it. That's what it does to you. It creates a thirst in you, doesn't it?

He that loveth abundance with increase, this is also vanity. And so this was one of the things that characterized this man's vain ambition, his increased prosperity.

He was going to make more and more and more, and he wasn't thinking of God nor the kingdom of God. But there was something more that characterized him, and that was his wayward indolence.

And that characterized his ambition. What were his motives for acquiring all these possessions?

Well, here we have his motives.

[ 12 : 43 ] I will say to my soul, soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years. Take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

You see, as he considers all that he has acquired, he sees this, that he has enough.

And not only has he enough, but he has enough and to spare. And ahead of him, oh well, ahead of him there are the many years which he fondly imagines he's going to get.

Why should he be bothered now with any of the responsibilities of life? Why should he be bothered about life's cares or life's anxieties?

He's got adequate provision, and with the adequate provision, he has, as he thinks, got many, many years.

[ 13 : 52 ] And he's going to fondly enjoy these things that he has acquired. But look, do you see this man? Do you see what's behind him?

And it's never far from his heels. And as he hurries along the various roads, there it is, it's behind him. Whichever corner he turns, it's there.

If he tries to shake it off, he can't. And you might say to me, what is it that is behind him? Well, don't you see that it is death that is stalking him?

And wherever he goes, there is this monster death. And it's never far away from him, and he can't shake it off.

And as we have said, no matter which corner he turns, and no matter where he tries to hide, it's there. And it's there. I remember in our elocution class in the Free Church College in Edinburgh, we had an elocution master, and he used to say this so beautifully, and he used to try to get us to say it as he did, but we could never emulate him.

[ 15 : 20 ] But it went like this. There is a reaper, and his name is death. And with his sickle keen, he reaps among the bearded grains and the flowers that grow between.

And you know, the ghastly reaper is there. And he is reaping. And we're never sure when he's going to reap us, aren't we?

And this is the lesson, you see, that our Lord was bringing home to this embittered brother. And he seems to be saying to this brother, you've asked me to speak for you to your brother about the inheritance.

And when you get your portion, what are you going to do, says Jesus to him? Ah, you're going to take your ease. You're going to eat, you're going to drink, you're going to be merry.

And the tragedy is, you will exclude God from your life. Do you remember Jesus speaking to his own disciples, warned them about their need for being in a constant state of preparation against his own coming, when he said this to them, let your loins be girded about and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, that when he will come from the wedding, then when he knocks, they may open to him.

[ 17 : 09 ] It's a state, you see, says Jesus, of being in a constant way of readiness because the reaper is there. This monster death is there.

He's stalking us. And how necessary it is to be ready. And that's what that embittered brother had to understand. And that's what you've got to understand and what I've got to understand.

But there's one more point that I want to leave with you before we leave it there for today. There was, as far as this rich farmer was concerned, his sensual indulgence.

Not only was he going to enjoy a life of ease, but as Jesus tells us here, he was going to enjoy sensual indulgence.

He was going to eat. He was going to drink. He was going to be merry. Or as it can be put, he was going to eat, drink, and enjoy himself merrily.

[ 18 : 24 ] You see, you remember the story of the prodigal son. Another case that Jesus brings to our notice. About forgetting God.

And there was the prodigal son. What was he bent on? Having a good time. That's what he was bent on. And so he decided on a course of enjoyment in the far country.

He wanted to get away from the restraints of home life. He wanted to throw everything to the wind and to enjoy himself in the pleasures of the world.

And of course, isn't that so often how it's been with us? And I speak to those of you who are Christians here today, and I say this to you. Isn't that how you felt?

I remember I used to feel like that in my teenage years. Oh yes. Cast away the restraints.

[ 19 : 33 ] Get out into the world. Have a good time there. Enjoy oneself. And I know that many young folks who come to the congregation here, I know that that's what you're thinking.

Perhaps it is you come here because your parents have taught you to come or because you just want to show that you will come for their sakes, but come the day when you are able to be on your

own two feet, you'll not come back here again, so you say.

Or at least you won't come as often as you've been doing. You're going to go into the far country. You're going to indulge yourself. You will say to your soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years.

Take thine ease. Eat, drink, and be merry. It's natural to be like that.

That's how the devil makes the world so attractive to us, or that is why I should say the devil makes the world so attractive to us. I've said this to you before and I say it to you again, I always remember going down into the center of the city of Glasgow at Christmas time and watching there the fairy lights put up for that festive period.

[ 21 : 13 ] You know it made it like fairy land. Going down Socky Hall Street, Renfield Street, Buchanan Street, round George Square, part of Argyle Street, you see the wonderful display of lights and it's all like fairy land.

But come the middle of January, the lights are down and what are you left with? The dirty, sooty, drab, grey buildings of the center of the city of Glasgow.

And it always reminds me of what the devil is like. He puts up the tinsel lights, doesn't he? He makes the world that we are living in so attractive as far as its pleasures are concerned.

And it's as if the devil is coming to us and saying to us, now don't get too serious about what the minister is saying and don't get too serious about the church. Don't get too serious about the Bible. You enjoy yourself. You have a real fine time. And later on you can think about these things that have been talked about.

[ 22 : 37 ] Now, we might ask ourselves, well, what was wrong with eating and drinking and being married as far as this man was concerned?

I wouldn't like you to misunderstand me in any way this morning. I wouldn't like you to think that I'm trying to make the Christian life seem to be a dull, drab life.

I've never found it dull or drab. I found it a very happy life. A very contented life indeed. Nor would I exchange it for anything else.

It's not dull, it's not drab. But the devil tries to say to us it's dull and drab. And he says, I'm going to put on a show for you.

And I'm going to make the world for you a much brighter place and a happier place. A place where you can eat and drink and really enjoy yourself.

[ 23 : 45 ] But then you see what the devil doesn't tell you and what Christ was telling this embittered brother was just this. That life although it is a happy thing or can be a happy thing has also got its very serious side to it.

Because it's a serious thing to live. And much more so it's a serious thing to die. And it's a serious thing to be summoned into the presence of Almighty God at his judgment bar.

And that is why Christ would not allow this brother to trifle with life. And so our Lord warns this man of the danger of covetousness.

Of the danger of his longings for a life of ease and enjoyment at the expense of his soul. And that is why Jesus tells us elsewhere what shall a man give in exchange for his soul.

So is he that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God. If I've got anything to say this morning following on from what I've already said on this parable it's just this.

[ 25 : 29 ] See to it my dear friend that you've made provision for your soul. It's all very well to make provision for your body and it's all very well to pamper up the body and to look after it medically and otherwise.

But I ask you have you been looking after your soul because what if God should say today thou fool this night thy soul shall be required of thee then who shall these things be or those things be which thou have provided.

It's not worth it is it? It's not worth having all that we crave for in this life. It's not worth having a home full of all the nice things.

It's not worth having a stable of cars and all that sort of thing if we've lost our souls. Oh yes if God gives us these things let's accept them but let's see to it that we've not excluded him at the expense of these things that's the point I'm making.

Don't exclude God from your life at the expense of these things. Don't exclude the Savior because if you need anything you need him.

[ 27 : 12 ] Let us pray. Oh Lord we pray that as far as we are concerned may we see that we have our priorities right.

Forbid oh God that we should barter these souls of ours away for a mess of pottage in this world a mess of pottage that won't last but grant oh God that we may lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven where no thief breaks through to steal and where no moth corrupts.

Be with each and all of us take us to our homes in safety and forgive our sins in Jesus name we ask it Amen.