

Foothills Christian Assembly Sermon September 15, 2019

Luke 12: 13 – 21 - "Rich Toward God" – Part I

4 "And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. 5 But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him! 6 Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God. 7 But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.

8 "Also I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God. 9 But he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God. 10 And anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but to him who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven.

11 Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say. 12 For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say."

13 Then one from the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." 14 But He said to him, "Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?" 15 And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses." 16 Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. 17 And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' 18 So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry." ' 20 But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' 21 So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

22 Then He said to His disciples, "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on. 23 Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing. 24 Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds? 25 And which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? 26 If you then are not able to do the least, why are you anxious for the rest? 27 Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 28 If then God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith? 29 And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. 30 For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things. 31 But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. 32 Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. 33 Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys. 34 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

I. Introduction

- a. By the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Luke places this event and parable here after Christ has encouraged his disciples against fear of man and toward the fear of God instead, all designed to strengthen and encourage them against the external persecutions and threats against their future apostolic ministries. The apostate Jewish leadership and the brutal Roman civil rulers would attack and kill Jesus, and the same would happen to most of His apostles. He has just finished warning and preparing them for this intense external resistance to their Gospel work.
- b. So, here in today's text begins Jesus' description of the great internal threat against the Gospel work of His disciples: covetousness. Christ gives two warnings, both containing the same basic elements. After telling the parable of the covetous fool, Jesus warns us, *"So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."* And earlier Jesus says, *"Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses."*
 - i. About these words, Poole commented, *"It is a golden sentence, which deserves to be engraven in every soul."*¹
- c. We will see in today's text that it is the FOOL, the one who does not ponder God, consider God, and love God in the day to day thoughts and plans of life, the one who lives as if God is not watching over us- the FOOL – who will give way to covetousness.
 - i. The Fool has a heart that ignores the First Commandment
 1. Ex 20:3 "You shall have no other gods before Me."
 2. Covetousness is idolatry
 - a. Ephesians 5:5 "For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, ***nor covetous man, who is an idolater***, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God."
 - b. Colossians 3:5 "Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry."
 - c. Poole *"covetousness, is an immoderate desire of having of this world's goods, which discovers itself either by unrighteous acts in procuring, or uncharitable omissions for the keeping, of the things of this life. It is that ...love of money, which the apostle determineth to be the root of all evil."*²
 - ii. Covetousness: the fruit of the heart that will not have Jehovah as the only God: the only Treasure, Redeemer, Provider and Lord.

¹ Poole, M. (1853). [*Annotations upon the Holy Bible*](#) (Vol. 3, p. 234). New York: Robert Carter and Brothers.

² Poole, M. (1853). [*Annotations upon the Holy Bible*](#) (Vol. 3, p. 234). New York: Robert Carter and Brothers.

1. The heart will turn to the things of this world as treasure, salvation, provision and rule.
- d. Finally, let's all remember again, Judas, the thief, is present for this teaching.
 - i. Will we be like him and not have ears to hear, or will we heed God's Word today and repent as He works by His Spirit?
- e. Today's message: Luke 12: 13 – 21 - "Rich Toward God" – Part I
 - i. **The Disputed Inheritance v13 – 15 – Today – Part 1**
 1. **Beware of Covetousness**
 - ii. The Parable of the Covetous Fool v16-20 – Next week Part 2
 1. The Problem of Plenty v16,17
 2. The Practical Solution v18
 3. The Selfish Motive v19
 4. God Rebukes the Fool v20
 - iii. Christ gives the general warning to us all v21
- II. The Disputed Inheritance v13-15
 - a. The man's demand
 - i. 13 Then one from the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me."
 - ii. Sproul "In the middle of the very weighty discourse that Jesus is giving the multitude about the danger of committing the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, somebody from the crowd interrupts him with a crass and selfish concern."³
 - iii. Bock "The danger of the pursuit of possessions is that it can make one insensitive to people. Greed can create a distortion about what life is, because *the definition of life is not found in objects, but relationships, especially to God and his will.*"⁴
 - iv. "Teacher, tell my brother" –
 1. This man is willing to interrupt Jesus and obtrusively force his own desires upon Jesus and the crowd.
 - a. Principle: selfishness destabilizes and distracts from Gospel work.
 - i. Do you get derailed from Gospel work (and derail others) because of selfish focus upon material possessions?
 2. This man sees Jesus not as his teacher but as his way to get what he wants from his brother. While he flatters with "Teacher", he treats Jesus like his personal servant instead of his teacher.

³ Sproul, R. C. (1999). [*A Walk with God: An Exposition of Luke*](#) (p. 262). Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications.

⁴ Bock, D. L. (1996). [*Luke: 9:51–24:53*](#) (Vol. 2, p. 1150). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

- a. Bock "To define life in terms of things is the ultimate reversal of the creature serving the creation and ignoring the Creator"⁵
- b. Principle: covetousness blinds us to the purpose of our lives, and so we rob ourselves of the joy of God.
 - i. How often do you treat God this way? Do you perceive God as your personal problem-solvers? Do you look to God as a means for your personal and family happiness and fulfillment, or as your Lord to love and serve.
- 3. Also, this man views his relationship with his brother as a means to gain material possessions, rather than as an opportunity to serve and enjoy and love another person for God's glory.
 - a. Principle: covetousness blinds us to the purpose of our lives, so we rob ourselves of the joy of God's Church.
 - i. Do you perceive the Church in terms of what you get from Her or in terms of an opportunity to serve and love one another for God's glory? Why are you a member of Foothills Christian Assembly?
 - b. Principle: covetousness blinds us to the purpose of human relationships, turning others into rivals instead of neighbors and brothers.
 - i. Do you perceive others in terms of what they can get for you?
 - c. Principle: covetousness is one source of flattery.
 - i. Do you flatter?
 - 1. Exercise: ask others if you ever come across as a flatterer.
- v. "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me."
 - 1. Bock "A rabbi would often settle such disputes about inheritance because the regulations on them appear in the Pentateuch and the rabbi interpreted Torah"⁶
 - 2. So, to seek out a rabbi for help with a family dispute was an appropriate step and would have been within the cultural expectations of that time.
- vi. Inheritance
 - 1. Bock "Possessions were often held jointly as undivided shares. But it is not clear whether the complainant was getting nothing or whether he wanted his own piece of the pie, independent of the family. No more details are given concerning the problem.... the

⁵ Bock, D. L. (1996). [Luke: 9:51–24:53](#) (Vol. 2, p. 1150). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

⁶ Bock, D. L. (1996). [Luke: 9:51–24:53](#) (Vol. 2, p. 1149). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

man is not really asking Jesus to arbitrate, but to decide against the other brother. Jesus will not honor such a partisan request.”⁷

- a. So, we see that this man and his brother were in serious conflict over the inheritance. This man is willing to publicly present his brother as the guilty one in the situation. This man has chosen material possessions over relationship with his own flesh and blood brother. His priorities are terribly upside down.
 - b. Do you value material possessions more than peaceful relationships? Do you view others according to what you can get from them, or as another eternal soul to love and enjoy for God’s glory?
 - i. Exercise: Humble yourself and ask others if they ever feel used by you to get something, rather than loved and cherished as a child of God.
- b. Christ’s response
- i. 14 But He said to him, "Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?"
 1. Note the irony of this statement. The Divine God of the universe stands here as the perfect Man. The only righteous Judge. The only acceptable Mediator (arbitrator) between God and man. The covetous man, by his foolish, demanding, intrusive question has demonstrated that he does not understand Who he is dealing with. The foolish man sees Jesus only as another man, not as his Judge and Mediator. So, Jesus responds according to how the man treats Him. Jesus makes the point that if the man rejects Him for Who He Is, then the man will fail to benefit from His blessings as Judge and Mediator.
 - a. Sproul “All he could think about was his finances. His whole being was preoccupied with money.”⁸
 - b. Calvin “Christ saw that this man was neglecting doctrine, and was looking only to his private concerns. This is too common a disease. Many who profess the Gospel do not scruple to make use of it as a false pretence for advancing their private interests, and to plead the authority of Christ as an apology for their gains.”⁹
 2. Principle: when we reject Who Jesus Is as Judge and Mediator, our prayers are hindered.

⁷ Bock, D. L. (1996). *Luke: 9:51–24:53* (Vol. 2, p. 1149). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

⁸ Sproul, R. C. (1999). *A Walk with God: An Exposition of Luke* (p. 262). Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications.

⁹ Calvin, J., & Pringle, W. (2010). *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke* (Vol. 2, p. 147). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

- a. We do not receive that which we ask because we ask with wrong motives.
 - i. James 4:3 “You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.”
 - b. Jesus gives His people an answer to their “amiss” prayers that causes them to seek after Him. Note how Jesus answers this fool. Jesus causes this man to consider His Person and His Purpose more carefully.
- c. Christ’s warning
 - i. And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses."
 - 1. Jesus uses this situation as an opportunity to not only correct this man’s foolishness, but also to instruct His disciples and all who are present.
 - 2. Again Poole “
 - ii. “Take heed and beware” – a double warning
 - 1. Take heed = to see with the eyes; to see with the mind; to perceive; to beware; from a root word meaning “to stare at”
 - 2. Beware = to guard, to watch, to have eyes upon, to guard against violence; to be observant against harm; the action of a protector
 - 3. Jesus gives this very strong double warning for us to all be on our guard, watchful, against covetousness.
 - a. Watchful for our own souls.
 - b. Watchful for the souls of those God has placed in our lives.
 - c. Are you watchful, observant, “staring” (as it were with your mind) to be on guard against covetousness in your own soul and those God has placed in your life?
 - 4. It is likely this foolish man would have received Christ’s Word as being nosy and censorious.
 - a. Censorious = severely critical of others. Purpose = to watch someone else for the purpose of tearing them down.
 - b. Watchful = looking out for OUR OWN SOULS and the souls of others. Purpose = to watch all souls in our life for the purpose of building one another up in Christ.
 - c. How do you receive the loving watchfulness of those God has placed in your life?
 - d. Do others perceive your watchfulness as love and care?
 - iii. “For one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.”

1. Again, Poole “It is a golden sentence, which deserves to be engraven in every soul.”¹⁰
2. Oh, that our great God would be pleased to engrave this eternal truth upon our souls today! To believe and experience this truth is akin to returning to the Garden with our God. No worries intruded upon the souls of our first parents as they walked in perfection. Adam and Eve yet understood not their joy in that state of perfection with God. They perceived not the perfect bliss of experiencing their lives consisting in the abundance of possessing God and one another in unbroken fellowship and joy, with ceaseless unhindered conversation (prayers) with God, and perfect marital fellowship, before they became foolish, covetous and set their hearts upon following the lies of the devil by pursuing life apart from God, turning their lives into consisting only in the abundance of material possessions. Oh, how tragic was this state of misery they must have felt once they realized that which had been lost contrasted with the new world of sin and death.
3. YLT “because not in the abundance of one's goods is his life.”
4. Life = the living body and soul of a person.
 - a. Our life, both body and soul, is not found in our material possessions. Our material possessions do not give us life, especially cannot give life to our eternal souls, even as our bodies do depend upon sustenance.
5. This covetousness “is also discovered by a too much thoughtfulness what we shall eat, drink, or put on, or by the too great meltings of our hearts into our bags of gold or silver.”¹¹
 - a. Do you think and pray more about your LIFE, including both the well-being of your soul and your body for God’s glory, or do you think and pray more about the abundance of your material possessions?
 - b. When you pray about material possessions for yourself and others, what is your motive? God’s glory? God’s Kingdom? Or covetous selfishness?
6. Calvin “These words point out the inward fountain and source, from which flows the mad eagerness for gain. It is because the general belief is, that a man is happy in proportion as he possesses much, and that the happiness of life is produced by riches. Hence arise those immoderate desires, which, like a fiery

¹⁰ Poole, M. (1853). [*Annotations upon the Holy Bible*](#) (Vol. 3, p. 234). New York: Robert Carter and Brothers.

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furnace, send forth their flames, and yet cease not to burn within. If we were convinced that riches, and any kind of *abundance*, are evils of the present life, which the Lord bestows upon us with his own hand, and the use of which is accompanied by his blessing, this single consideration would have a powerful influence in restraining all wicked desires; and this is what believers have come to learn from their own experience. For whence comes it, that they moderate their wishes, and depend on God alone, but because they do not look upon their life as necessarily connected with *abundance*, or dependent upon it, but rely on the providence of God, who alone upholds us by his power, and supplies us with whatever is necessary?"¹²

7. An example of right relationship with possessions, one who is rich toward God: Psalm 112 "Praise the Lord! Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, Who delights greatly in His commandments. 2 His descendants will be mighty on earth; The generation of the upright will be blessed. 3 Wealth and riches will be in his house, And his righteousness endures forever. 4 Unto the upright there arises light in the darkness; He is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous. 5 A good man deals graciously and lends; He will guide his affairs with discretion. 6 Surely he will never be shaken; The righteous will be in everlasting remembrance. 7 He will not be afraid of evil tidings; His heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord. 8 His heart is established; He will not be afraid, Until he sees his desire upon his enemies. 9 He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever; His horn will be exalted with honor. 10 The wicked will see it and be grieved; He will gnash his teeth and melt away; The desire of the wicked shall perish."

III. Questions to know, love and obey God

- a. Do you see the interconnectedness of the Law of God and of sin?
- b. Has your covetousness kept you from fully pursuing God and His Kingdom?
- c. Has your covetousness impacted your prayers? = "Amisss" prayers
 - i. Do you treat God like your personal genie in a bottle?
- d. How has your coveting hurt your relationships with others?
 - i. What is your purpose in being at church today?
- e. Are you a flatterer?
 - i. Do you use others for personal fulfillment? Or do you enjoy service/love?
- f. How has the Lord used your "amisss" prayers to show your sin and show you His Presence and Glory more?
- g. Are you doubly on guard against covetousness? Without being censorious?

¹² Calvin, J., & Pringle, W. (2010). [*Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke*](#) (Vol. 2, pp. 147–148). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

- h. Are you rich toward God? (Psalm 112)
 - i. Do you receive riches as God's steward?
 - ii. Are you using wealth to advance God's Kingdom and destroy His enemies?
 - iii. Are you confident in why you want His riches and how you use them?
 - iv. Being rich toward God means being honored as mighty, and exalted as strong in God.
 - v. The rich toward God are the strong in God!!