

## Laying Up Treasures for Self

*(Luke 12:33-34) Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. {34} For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.* These words were spoken by Jesus to his disciple whom he calls His "little flock" (v32). They parallel to His more familiar words given to a multitude in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:19-21), and they conclude his teaching on the subject of material possessions. This is a "special discourse" that probably would not have been delivered were it not for an unusual incident that took place. This incident provided the occasion for Jesus' story known as the Parable of the Rich Fool which gives us a number of teachings.

For one, this parable gives us a **Warning against Covetousness**. While Jesus was talking with His disciples, a man spoke up and said, *(Luke 12:13) ... Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.* This is the unusual incident I referred to a moment ago. Jesus had been speaking of vital truths pertaining to spiritual matters and this man interrupts with a completely unrelated and out of order question. Such an interruption made it obvious that he was not concerned with spiritual things, that his whole heart and life were absorbed with the present life. To this disgruntled individual Jesus said, *(Luke 12:14) Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?*

It was a blunt question with a blunt refusal to have anything to do with a quarrel over family property. The Jewish law was specific enough on cases of this kind. The law said that the firstborn son was to receive a double portion (two-thirds) of the inheritance, and that the remainder was to be divided among the other sons (Deuteronomy 21:15-17). This was a law of long standing that allowed no debate. The man who spoke to Jesus was perhaps the younger brother complaining about not getting enough inheritance or it could have been an older brother complaining that he had not received his allotted 2/3 portion. Regardless, it seems that he thought he might be able to get the Galilean Teacher on his side in order to get an equal share of the inheritance.

What follows is a severe warning against covetousness. Notice *(Luke 12:15) And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness. "Watch out,"* said Jesus, *"Be on your guard against all kinds of covetousness."* The warning is against covetousness in any and all forms. Covetousness is not simply a desire for property; it is unlawful desire for something. Covetousness is really greed, an excessive or inordinate desire for gain.

After warning against covetousness, Jesus states the reason for the warning: *(Luke 12:15) A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.* Even when a man has more than enough, his possessions do not give him life. Life is more than things. A man's success is more than what he has been able to accumulate. So, we have a **warning against covetousness** illustrated in this story told by Jesus.

Jesus tells a story of a rich man who one year he had a bumper crop, and he did not know what to do with all his grain. He decided that he would solve the problem by tearing down his existing barns and build larger ones. This way no drought or depression would be able to touch him; he could lean back and enjoy himself for years to come. But God told him that very night he was going to die and thus goes his plans.

It's been said that the Parable of the Good Samaritan is the most practical of all the parables and perhaps it is. If that were true, let me suggest that the *Parable of the Rich Fool* is the **MOST NECESSARY**. Evidence of covetousness is on every hand. While adultery, drunkenness, and dishonesty are still frowned upon, covetousness is equally, if not more so, rampant through modern society and is often ignored. Even among professing Christians, it is so prevalent that it is scarcely recognized for what it is—a deadly sin. This worldly influence has so invaded the church some members are so involved in their own interests that they have little time and energy left for the Lord. Here was a man who apparently had great success, yet God called him a fool.

This man was a fool because of the important things he forgot. Let us learn from him and not make the same mistake.

**1. He forgot other people.** The first thing that leaps out from the story is that the man thought of no one except himself. In pulling down his barns and building bigger one, he was not directly injuring anyone else. In fact, he may have helped some by creating employment during the building phase. But he debates with himself about the matter. 6 times the pronoun "I" is used and 5 times "my" is found. We read sadly, "*What shall I do: for I have nowhere to store my crops?*" "*I will do this: I will pull down my barns . . . and there I will store all my grain and my goods.*" One gets the distinct impression that these schemes were formulated by self and for self. Other people never entered the man's mind. Not once did he remember those who labored for him in seedtime or at harvest. As he was saying to himself, "*What can I do, for I have no place to put my crops?*" Perhaps a neighbor across his field was saying, "*What can I do, for I don't even have bread for my children?*" If the rich man did not have enough barns there were other places where he could have put his grain. One person expressed it this way, "*Thou hast barns, -the bosoms of the needy, —the houses of the widows, -the mouths of orphans and of infants.*" But the rich man did not think of these barns, for in his little world there was room for no one but himself.

**2. He forgot that a man is more than what he owns.** The rich man conceived of life only in terms of physical things. It is here that he made a tragic mistake: he did not distinguish between *what a man has and what a man is*. Let me inject here that there is nothing wrong with wealth nor is Jesus teaching that prosperity is wrong. Money is one of those things that is neutral and it can either be good or bad depending on the user and it's not always easy to make a definite distinction. What we do need to understand is that the Bible gives several warnings against the dangers associated with wealth.

Notice the Scriptures say, "*(Mark 10:23) And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!*" Paul gives a bit more detail when he wrote to Timothy (*1 Tim 6:9-10*) *But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.* Then the danger is stated {10} *For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.* The basis for inventory of a man's life is not the same as in his business. So, it is more important to be rich in good deeds than to be rich in goods. But the man in this parable was gloating over his accomplishments in having an abundant harvest and seemed to put his security in his things for he said in (*Luke 12:19*) ... *Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.*

**3. "He forgot the source of real happiness.** Since the rich man had a false conception of life, he also had a false conception of happiness. He thought that he could be happy by eating and drinking and indulging himself as just noted in verse 19. There was another man, this one from Old Testament times, who made the same futile attempt. He wrote the Book of Ecclesiastes, and in it he tells of his quest for happiness. This man was Solomon and he had everything the world had to offer available to him and he tried it all. But after he had done all these things and had evaluated their worth, he bent down and wrote: "*All is vanity and a striving after wind*" (*Ecc 2:11*). He came to realize, like countless others long since, that *happiness is not to be found in things*. Money can buy much, but money cannot buy a sense of usefulness, a clear conscience, and mind content with God and man. These are the true riches, without which no man can be really happy.

**4. He forgot God.** The greatest blunder of the rich man was that he did not take God into account. There was nothing wrong with his decision to tear down his barns and build larger ones. In fact, this shows the man was a planner for tomorrow, which in and of itself is not bad. A good farmer must have foresight and plan ahead. But his fatal mistake was that in all of his well-laid plans not one thought had been given to God. This is a common downfall of many believers. Many forget God when they are making their plans. Thus, James wrote: *(James 4:13-15) Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: {14} Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. {15} For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.*

Whatever our long-range plans may be, let us remember that the biggest factor of all is God. If we leave Him out of our plans, they are sure to end in ruin.

**5. He forgot death.** The rich man thought that he was going to live a long life. Now really, don't most of us think the same way? He made his plans for "many years" yet he had only one day left. We too deceive ourselves in thinking that we have plenty of time. We put off till tomorrow and yet we do not know if there will be a tomorrow. As someone has put it, the devil no longer says to man "You will not die", but rather "You will not die so soon." The Bible says: *(Psa 90:9-10) For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told. {10} The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.*

In the height of his prosperity and self-satisfaction, God appeared to the rich man and required his life. How much did he leave? *All that he had.* Jesus then asked in verse 20 who shall possess the wealth that this man left. The implication is that his wealth will no longer be his. As commonly said, "You can't take it with you." So, how foolish that he spent all his life striving for the things he had to leave behind and neglecting the true values that he could have taken with him. He had a good title on earth, but no permanent lease and no title in heaven. One night his soul slipped out from all his wealth, ease and self-indulgence and went as a hungry beggar into the presence of God. *(Luke 12:21) So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.*

Does the rich fool in any way describe you? It's so easy to lose focus and priority for life, especially in our fast pace world. There is nothing wrong with "fast pace" so long as we are putting the emphasis in the proper places. Are you a Christian? What if the Lord says of you, "This night thou soul is required of thee!" Would you be ready? You have planned many aspects of your life yet have ignored the most important. If we can assist in a public way, please come as we stand and sing.