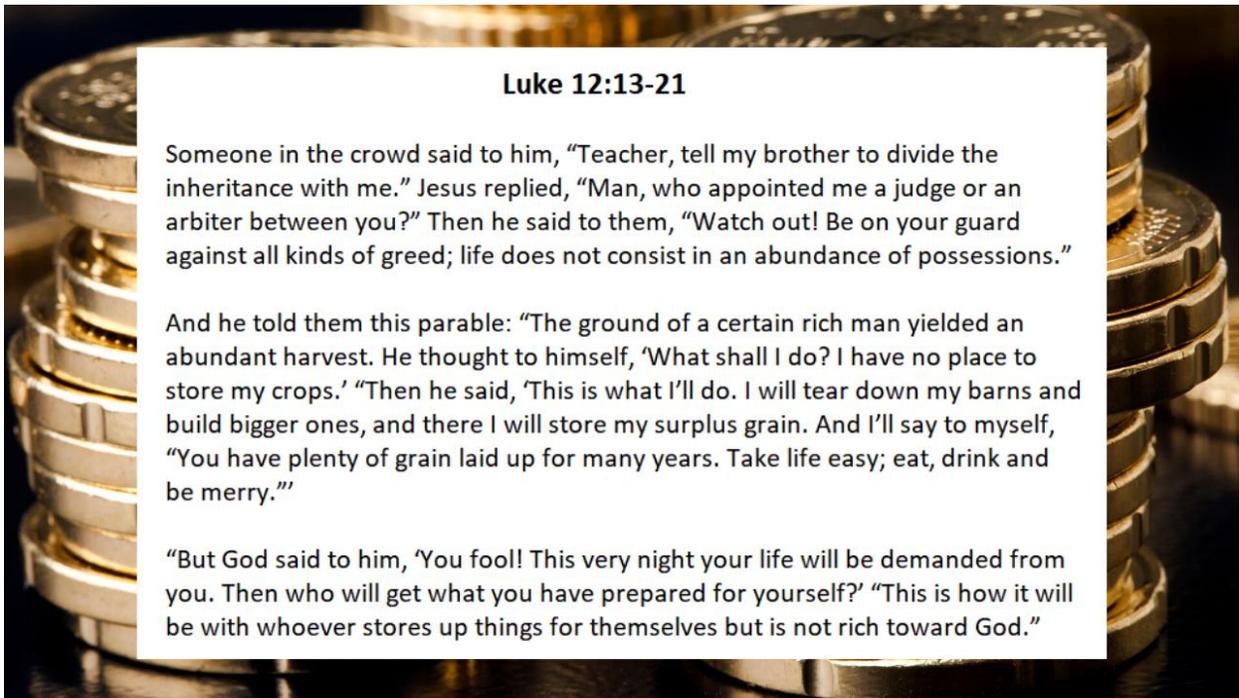


Parable of the Rich Fool

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Luke 12:13-21

Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." Jesus replied, "Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?" Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions."

And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.' "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. And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry."'

"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?' "This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God."

Commonly referred to as the Parable of the Rich Fool, this story contains one of the few times in the Bible that God calls a person a fool.

The obvious reason why Jesus delivered this parable was to respond to a request from someone in the audience. Apparently this person had detected in Jesus a fairness of spirit that would qualify him to settle a dispute over an inheritance.

The ugly dispute is all too familiar: haggling over furniture, dishes, house, land, and savings account left by the deceased. Basically, Jesus is asked to be a referee and he refuses. Rather than act as judge and jury, Jesus states a proverbial truth by way of telling a short story.

One of the interesting aspects to note about the person God called a fool, is that nowhere does the text say this man was evil. There is nothing in the text to suggest that he was dishonest. He appears to have gotten his goods fair and square. He planned and turned a profit.

He appears to have been a hard worker. When he prospered, he looked ahead to know how he could manage his goods.

But he had a personal character flaw: he was selfish and self-centered. He was too concerned with his own welfare. He does not appear to be touched by the needs of other people.

Some of the happiest people I have known have been those who have very little of this world's goods. Or, if they did live comfortably, they were always willing to share. Their lives were in spiritual order; they had learned what the important things in life are. This is the simple thrust of what Jesus is saying.

Don't misunderstand: Jesus never told us that it is wrong for us to have worldly possessions. The wrong in being wealthy is not the ownership of the riches; but, it is what these riches can do to us. They can turn our eyes off of Jesus and cause us to focus more on our possession than on the work of God's kingdom.

The barns of the rich man in our parable were not the important thing. The man needed to put his wealth in proper focus. Since he did not do this, God called him ... a fool.

So Jesus warns us about keeping the proper perspective. Let us not forget, Jesus' perspective on money and possessions differs considerably from man's perspective.

Too many of us place too great an emphasis on what we have. What we have amassed in this world does not matter in the eyes of God. How we make use of what we have, and how we have used what we have to help others, does matter.

In closing, here's how the editor-in-chief of *The Saturday Evening Post*, George Horace Lorimer, put it—he said:

It's good to have money and the things
that money can buy, but it's good also to
check-in every once in a while and make sure
you haven't lost the things that
money cannot buy.

"All our money has a moral stamp. It is coined over again in an inward mint.
The uses we put it to, the spirit in which we spend it, give it a character
which is plainly perceptible to the eye of God."

~ *Thomas Starr King*