

SN, April 16, 78 J.M.W.K.I

THE RICH FOOL

Luke 12:16-21

Money is a test of character. Most men go down before that test. Our Lord's teaching on money and it's use are the only practical teachings for the 20th century that are just as good as they were in the first century. But are we as Christians applying these practical teachings of our Lord. For the ordinary man, life largely revolves around the problem of money. Earning a livelihood, making ends meet, providing for illness, accident, old age. These for the ordinary man are urgent matters not to be neglected except that any time when there is plain disaster for the whole family.

V4-5

Now Jesus recognized this and here is a profound interesting crowd listening to the gracious words that proceed from his mouth. They were agitated by the solemn warning. To fear him who has power to kill and to cast into Hell. Luke 12:4-5. They were excited and there was greatful joy and assurance, of special providence. Which applied to their daily wants and they watched over them. V. 6-7, when he said, the very hairs on your head are numbered.

V. 6-7

V. 13

Their attention was suddenly interrupted. There was one among them who listened to him. Who spake as never a man spake, whose thoughts were wrapped up in the love of money. Dr Lee & wife - Eden Park - Beach - crossed Miss. River to town in Ark. got on Expressway Sweet 1/2 hr. said to wife "Hong it turned wrong back yonder" she said "well, if you did, you'd turned wrong about 30 mi. back yonder somewhere". - find no exit - dirt road stunted - mud - rain falling - check - farmer front back - hairfooted - jeans - heavy shirt, corn cobs pipe - mister can tell me how to get off this Expressway? - Smith Range "Ben King has 30 cks gas & every time I go to town, I don't know how to get home." That wall all he told him! had upon his mind the substance that the earth can offer, or that wealth can purchase. He had no tastes for these spiritual treasures that Christ was offering. Without money and without price - to himself and to others. But he was thinking about what

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Christ was teaching. And he was quick to conclude that he might somehow avail himself of Christ to accomplish his own purpose and his own end. But then to fill his heart, really excluded Christ from his thoughts.

V. 13 He says, Master speak to my brethren that he divide the inheritance with me. He disclaimed all right or power to settle the question of that character. He warned him against covetousness. And taught him a lesson with respect to wealth. That he and others in the pursuit of riches find it hard to believe, and very slow to practice. Take heed and beware of covetousness, for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesses, V. 15.

How true, how wise, how impressive. Life has a better and a more enduring substance. Than say gold that perishes. It has a higher aim and a more substantial object than found in the pursuit of earthly wealth.

They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare. And in foolish and hurtful lust drown men in destruction and in tradition. I Tim. 6:9. This danger in tendency and destruction in the love of money, on the hearts and the habits of men, are distinctly portrayed in the parable connected with the text which we are using this evening.

To confirm his warning against covetousness, and to illustrate the deception of it, and the influence it has upon a man's heart. He is going to talk about a parable and about laying up treasures for one's self. Now, or laying up treasures toward God.

From this text, we can deduct in this parable the general principle of what selfish wealth has on religious life, and on the character of man. It is a history of a man who made to keep. He accumulated, to lay up for himself. He labored not to give, but he was anxious to get. And he was not very glad about distributing anything. But he was rich toward himself. But he was poor toward God.

The parable offers us authority and proof of the evil of seeking wealth for its own sake. Saving it up, just for selfish pleasure.

Now the parable that comes from our Lord Jesus, he recognized that here was a problem. And it is surprising the amount of teaching that you find devoted to the problem of money. And here, as elsewhere, what he had to say is of great importance. Jesus did not belittle the material. We are to pray for our daily bread, as well as for forgiveness. He did not discredit a man working. Saving, looking ahead. The absence of which simply means that others will have to look out for us.

In King James it says something about take no thought for tomorrow. But this certainly is a mistranslation of the text. What he said, as later versions bring out, be not anxious for tomorrow. Which is another matter. We cannot wisely take no thought for tomorrow. When we trust in God, live without nerve-wracking anxiety for tomorrow.

Jesus thinks the poor are more likely than the rich to recognize the true meaning of life and to enter into the kingdom of God. Luke 6:20. But it holds no brief for poverty as such. It is unthinkable to think that he would rejoice in poverty. Poverty means over crowding, it means undernourished. It means the absence of beauty. It means

very little help and influence. It means little help in times of disaster. Poverty means that taverns rage in juvenile delinquency gets high, and the crime rate and death rate rises. Now Jesus would not look on this as being ideal.

It is clear however, that Jesus was concerned with the dangers of wealth. As he was with the dangers of poverty. He said, "lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven. Matt. 6:19-21."

Now in expounding these verses, one preacher said to a well-to-do congregation, these words do not forbid the accumulation of material goods, but only warn against the folly of places valuables where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break in and steal.

But Jesus was not advocating the use of modern devices. Moth balls or safety deposit boxes. He was protesting the gathering up of great material wealth for two reasons. First, because material wealth is not permanent. Moth, rust, thieves. Depression can wipe out the existence of it. And second, because the lust for material wealth is fatal to a high life. Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. If you become completely absorbed in money making, so that you have no time for anything else, and indeed no other interests - you will become the kind of person which this produces. A man whose riches if any are all outside of him. And within him there is poverty, starvation, etc.

Let us look at this text and see what we can get out of it. There are at least two things that we need to say about this parable. One is, rich towards self.

Second, rich toward God.

### I. RICH TOWARDS SELF

Over and over in this parable is illustration and proof of the evil things that attend selfish pursuit. Where the use of wealth can come in and influence life. There are listed a frightening catalog of evils. Which have their being and finality in eternity. With fire that is never quenched.

If we get the insight into this fact or this illustration, and the principle here is that one's wealth needs to be consecrated to the glory of God.

He takes this from agriculture, in which a man, a farmer makes the pursuit of his life for profit. From any other professions you could do the same thing. With an industrial pursuit, or any profession - like medicine. This is to say that the physician's made pit in life. You could do this on the stock market where men speculate and some by skillful trickery have schemes of fraud. There are thousands of operations that are spreading over the land, but nothing of this kind is here in this subject. It is a case where a man in his pursuit, segregates every-thing and he finally comes face to face with God. Man, the worker, and God the blesser. Occupy the vision and fill the thought.

These two work together. God has crowned the toil of the man. And the man is rich. But alas, the man is rich without any gratitude or feeling of benevolence, or even the desire of fellowship with him who has crowned his labor with increase.

And with success. In fact, the man is selfish. The very character of the man, as Jesus says, a certain rich man. We find that we can deduct from this several different things about this man being rich towards self. Let us look and see what we can find here.

V. 16 First, it (blinds) the mind. Wealth that is sought in this way, the ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully. He was already rich. The success of his products and the years had brought him extreme large amounts of wealth. It was not stolen or ill-gotten wealth.

It had grown by God's blessing upon the skill and the care of this man. He plowed, he planted, he sowed. And God gave seasons - winter, summer, sunshine, rain, seedtime, and harvest. And his stores were continually being filled.

The direct agency of God's providence, it is displayed here in this case of prosperity. It is very impressive here about this man growing rich. But the rich man was unconscious of the source of his success. He does not recognize the kindness, the love of God, etc.

The wealth absorbs his thoughts, fills his visions, and takes all of his affection. God is ignored. And selfishly he excludes God from all of his thoughts. He may have imagined that some of this was his own thrift. Some of his own foresight or some of it came because of his energy or perseverance.

But he does not acknowledge these or acknowledge God. Or confess his providential goodness. In any respect, the sun, rain, and air cause the earth to bring forth fruit each season.

And he was satisfying and confident that he trusted in his wealth without God in the world. He was rejoicing in the harvest. He was very stupid and unconscious of the giver of fruitful seasons. He had toiled for his wealth and he has it.

Now as poor as he is in all other things, he is rich and increased in goods. He has a God, but it is the God of gold. It has a temple, but it is a temple of manna. But rich as he is, he was not rich toward God. But he was rich in goods and in nothing else. So as God would say to this man, why you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. Such is the man in this picture. He had layed up treasures for himself. So in the third place, he was blind.

Second, it hardened the heart - V. 17-18. And he thought to himself saying,  
what shall I do, Because I have no room where to bestow my fruits." The barns, which had sufficient to preserve the product, was inadequate for the plentiful harvest of this fruitful season. He must therefore preserve the fruits of his work. Build some larger store houses. He made a resolve. I'll pull down this barn and build larger ones. Spacious that will receive and retain all of this fruit. In the desire to preserve his goods - there is nothing to be censored or condemned.

The sin or act consists in its selfishness. He tends to (take care) of his goods.

That is right. But does it only for himself - and that is wrong.

He never loses sight of himself and his goods. God is forgotten, and the poor are forgotten. The good that wealth might do, the hearts it might gladden, the moral wastes it might make to rejoice and blossom as a rose - do not come into his mind. His heart is hardened. Part of his plan is to use his wealth. What cares he for the things of God. These are my goods, my provisions, my hands have gotten all of this wealth. May I not do what I please with my own.

In whom, shall I consult, God or the poor. Or the various causes of some orphanage or some hospital. Or some home for the needy. In that case, my present barns will not hold what all they have. No, none of these.

Self becomes it's counselor. I and selfishness will settle the matter. What shall I do. I will pull down. I will put up. I will bestow my goods, and put them in a place of safety. Here you have a combination of selfishness and pride. The legimate wealth which he has. It is enough to make him rich. But how shall they that have riches in this way, enter into Heaven. He was laying up riches for himself. His presence was as glistening as his heart could desire. He had enough for long years that were coming ahead. His future was unruffled because he had luxury and here is a portrait of a man who has a hardened heart.

So he is blind in his mind, and he is hardened in his heart.

V. 19

Third, he ~~(deceives)~~ the soul - V. 19. I would say to my soul, soul thou hast much goods layed up for many years. Take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. The selfish passion for wealth seldom tolerates self-indulgence. And it is generally too exacting for the one or the other. This man's inspiration is not the pure and undefiled revelation, but in all of his purposes and plans, he has larger barns that need to be built. He has an abundant harvest that needs to be gathered. He now passes into the future. A long line of years stretch out and away from him. As much goods is layed up for the many years that are going to come to meet him. Hitherto he labored, and henceforth, he will rest.

He forgot God in the getting. He will not think of him in the using of the wealth. He layed it up for himself. He will enjoy it alone. His aspirations now are soul, these are thy goods, thy God's. Enter now into thy rest - sit down, eat, drink, and be merry.

The long years of toil are envied. The anxious thought of tomorrow cannot disturb him. To keep on economizing and enjoying thyself is henceforth his life of goodness. Eat and drink. So, you have the choice of food to eat, clothes to wear. Clothe thyself in purple and fine linen. You have all of these lusts - whatever passions suggests - your wealth can supply. Soul be merry. Take part in all of the things that you desire.

V. 20

Such as the dream of this man, who was foolish with his wealth. But the dream perished, faded away, passed away, and rebuked him. Why riches, take wings and fly away. Or he, for them, who forgets God. While his dream was at its height in midst of long years and pleasure ahead of him - it was God who spoke. And what terrible words. Thou (fool) this night thy soul shall be required of thee.

In today's world such a warning, many people might say is not practical because who can lay anything up in this world. Food going up, clothes, rent, taxes. And Jesus observed here, "you can't take it with you." Now this is one of the points of the rich fool and the well to-do-farmer here. He had harvested his capacity. And what should he do with his crops. He concluded, I'll build a new barn. I'll store this goods. Then I'll talk to my soul. He patted himself on the back and said, I am a wise man. But God said, I am a fool. To prepare for death and leave these things.

You may have great possessions and yet no happiness, no peace of mind, and you may see your great possessions as a hinderance or a curse to your children. So is every one that lays up treasures on the earth. Jesus many times talked about trying to separate a man from his needs, and getting him to focus on the right thing. This was brought out in the parable of the rich man in Lazarus. The rich man was clothed in fine linen. And at his gate, was a poor man named Lazarus. He had sores on his body - but he was fed from the crumbs of the rich man. The poor man died and woke up in Paradise. The rich man woke up in torment.

Now some people read that and they are speechless over (the punishment) for the rich man. Should a man be punished simply because he is rich? Should a man be rewarded because he is poor? But to suppose that the rich man in the parable simply because he was rich is to miss the (point) of the story. To be sure, no glaring vices or evils were attributed to him. He was not called a thief or a drunkard, or any of those things. But he passed the poor man without feeling any compassion. The man with the body that was full of sores, he could pass him by deliberately day after day, and not really see him. That was his offense in the eyes of God.

*Grandmother - Birthday <sup>last</sup> Friday - 98 Years -  
-11- I am - love everybody*

II. RICH TOWARD GOD *V. 21*

Now let us look at the (other side) of this for just a few minutes. This parable, it contains a solemn admonition against the (sin of covetousness) and suggests that the end to which one gives himself to wealth is a warning against laying up treasures for your own sake. For your own exclusive use. It teaches that wealth is a gift of God and it is to be used for his glory and for his service. It is proper then for us to consider this side as Jesus talked about this man whose soul - that was brought to damnation because of it.

First, a gift of God. Let us understand that wealth is a gift of God. That it's common use and meaning as we think of the world's idea of wealth - as the amount and use. We think of the object - and give wealth in the ability to do good. As opportunity offers and as our means allow.

Now this idea of the power to work, that we may have wherewith to give to him that needeth, it is as destitute of meaning. And had no ability to work for means. Then only can we be excused from giving. Paul described it, as the duty of a converted thief, to labor with his hands, that he may have to give to him that needeth. Eph. 4:28. Now this makes a rule of the Christian life. To give a portion of the hard earned fruits or daily labor. To do good. Wealth in this sense is not measured by the amount of our gifts or the ability to give largely. But in the ability to give something. And in this position to give as God has prospered us, and to give willingly and cheerfully. The ability, the spirit, and the obligation of this law is certainly a happy combination and reflects on the life of Jesus. But whoso hath this world's goods and seeth his brother have need, and shut up his compassion against him, how dwelleth the love of God in him. I John 3:17. The principle of this is, the possession of the means of relieving and contributing something toward the relief of a needy brother involves the duty of giving.

He who hath the means, whether he is limited or whether he has great wealth. Is able to give and it is under the law of God that he give accordingly.

The use we make of this wealth displays that God giveth us riches. All the means by which wealth is required.

Your head, your energy that executes your arms that work, your hands that perform. Your eyes that read. All of these things, wealth comes through God. Of course, wealth is inherited. Wealth comes through trade and commerce. Through the fruit of our professions.

Here is one who plants, one who waters, and one who executes. But God gives the increase. It is therefore a duty first in order. Of giving importance to the idea of recognizing God and it depends upon him. He provides the increase and it comes from him. It says that we must get and give - get first and then give.

All such that we might take some commands and rules that people have and say that they are infallible. Give, and it shall be given unto you. The rule of the Christian life is to begin the giving. And give, says Christ, something according to your ability. Give a little. Let those that are able to give more, to supply. And giving you will grow rich towards God. Give to everyone that asketh you for every good cause. The command is give the amount according to your ability.

Giving scatters. God multiplies his mercy. As we obey through giving. Give and it shall be given unto you. Pressed down, and shaken together. And running over shall

men give unto you your bossom. For with the same measure that you meet with all shall it be measured to you again. Luke 6:38.

Now this is a new method in increasing in gifts. It is not by pulling down our barns. Not for building greater or making more room to bestow a plentiful harvest. It will not absorb in the grain business or in an enlarged trade. And it is not for the surplus capital that we are working on. But it is by riches of giving to do good. Growing rich toward God. By right use of our means. Now this is the only truly satisfactory way of laying up treasures in Heaven. And this is the command.

That we may have to give is really wealth as a gift.

Second, wealth is a talent. It is something that we are (trusted with.) And we are to (be useful) with it. We are to make the (right employment) of it. The Lord maketh rich. I Sam. 2:7. God, in his providence, filled the barns of that farmer. And caused him to prosper. The sea, the earth, and the sky are filled with his treasures. And his creation, is so great, that this man had ignored this fortune.

The poor, ye have always with ye. The Lord maketh poor. Christ was poor. He had not where to lay his head. And his friendships and affections, and faith supplied his daily want.

The obligation to give, and give according as God has prospered us, is absolute and universal. It binds all of us. None of us are excused. It is really the law of life.

"How hard it is for a man who is rich, to enter into the kingdom of Heaven. Go to now and weep. And howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted. Your gold and silver, rust has taken over. Thou fool, this night, thy soul is required of thee." Wealth is not only a gift of God but it is a talent. That we need to use.

When Jesus said thou fool, this meant that this man was (restless, confused, and unhappy. What must he do. He is going to find life and get some joy out of it. Like that ruler who came to Jesus and said, what must I do to inherit eternal life. You lack one thing - sell, all you have and distribute it among the poor. What a challenge, what an opportunity. A new force for this young man was to get a new faith and a new hope, and your whole life will be altered. Thereby, cut loose from your wealth, Jesus advised him - follow me. And he says, you will become rich for God. But sad to say, this man with these probable demands upon him to give up his worldly goods, to live for Christ, was not for him.

Third, wealth is to be consecrated - if you are going to be rich towards God, it must be consecrated. Wealth, whether you regard it as an actual possession, or an ability to get. It may be held and enjoyed. But if you are going to be rendered rich towards God, there must be the idea that you are laying this up in Heaven for God. You remember, Jesus charged them not to be rich in the world and the uncertain riches, but to live for the living God to become rich, toward him. It means that all of your good works are not going to be wasted and are not going to be lost. They will go up as a memorial unto God.

As an inscription on a tombstone, of a charitable man, it illustrates the force

of consecrating your wealth to God. Here lies Estella - who transported a large fortune to Heaven in acts of charity and has gone thither to enjoy it. What a consecration of wealth. I Tim. 6:17, 19. 29:13.

Now let us in closing say just a word about covetousness and greed. And the tragic part of it, the wealth that is laid up for selfish pleasures. They that will be rich will fall into temptations and a snare. And into many hurtful and foolish lusts. And down men in destruction and tradition, for the love of money is the root of all evil. I Tim. 6:9,10. Yes, the love of money is very frightening. You contemplate wealth and forget the author of it. Or the giver of the plentiful harvest. He looked at the wealth, and he thought about the merriment and what he could do in life. His mind had no God, his heart no worship. His soul no eternity, and his hope no treasure. He was alone, rich, selfish, and a fool.

So is he that layeth up treasures for himself and is not rich toward God. How full of horror this announcement is. This night thy soul is required of thee. Yes, those tonight, the poor man, the wretched man, the ruined man. This is his position. It is not what he wished - but what he deserved. So it will be.

Covetousness merits the rebuke of this parable. It is always an evil, a sin against God. It is an easily besetting sin. Very deceitful and destructful.

You know it is the only sin in the catalog of transgressions. In the word of God that is incomparable to the Christian's profession. It is glaring that in our church pews that we resort to worldly things. It is tragic the covetousness is idolatry. And this is treason against God - it dethrones God.

Be not deceived, neither fornicators nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor abusers of themselves or of mankind, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor thieves, nor revilers nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God. I Cor. 5:11, 9, 10.

Look at this picture of the money lovers. It is drawn by the Holy Spirit. It places the covetous man along side of the thief or the drunkard - with all of the whoes that are there.

Human experience confirms the judgement of Jesus - how hard it is for a rich man to enter into Heaven. It is hard to live in this way for the lust of money which provide for the material comforts of life. To exploit this alone, is an ugly sin before God. The more one studies the teachings of Jesus, the life, the events - the more convinced we are that Jesus was always right. He is right even when he doesn't seem to be right. Suppose when we should come to see and believe that he is right on the problem of money. And resolve to follow his teachings. Well, for one thing, we would chose for ourselves a standard of living that admits of health and culture and not of expensive luxuries. This would save us the nerve wracking anxiety over money matters. We might at times wonder about tomorrow. But we are so prone to think about luxury standards.

Dr. Arthur Morgan in a commencement address in a college told about two young men employed as accountants for \$5,000 a year, several years ago. One of them selected for himself a living standard that required spending every dollar that he made. He postponed any children in his home, but he had an expensive automobile, and a golf club membership, and membership in all the clubs of the city. The other man lived in a very modest home, he and his wife got most of their exercise in the garden. He drove a second-hand Ford for transporation. They discovered that books

and magazines are less expensive than night clubs. And more rewarding. They found after awhile, that they found many rich friends. And the day came when in their work, there was a mismanagement of funds. And somebody ask them about falsifying their accounts. One of them refused - not the one that had lived up to every cent that he had made. He, poor fellow, lacked any courage and stripped himself of any luxuries, which he had been accustomed too. Dr. Morgan concluded when a man selects for himself and his family a standard of living that admits culture but not expensive luxuries, he is making a choice of no small importance. And whether a crisis comes - he shall be able to call his soul his own. And this is what Jesus was preaching in this story.

Dr. Edward Rosenow, a member of Mayo Clinic, did important bacteriological research. Said as he was growing up on a farm in Wisconsin, one night his brother was dangerously ill. The nearest Doctor was sent for. And came by a team of horses. He was timid. He followed the Doctor to the sick room. But he hid behind the sofa. He observed what he was doing. Presently, he watched him examine the patient and pour out the medicine. And then say, have no fear, he is going to get well. "Whereupon the lighted smile of the faces was wonderful and that little boy behind the sofa decided that he wanted to do something that would cause light to appear in people's faces. So this he did. Instead of being covetous - he went out to let his light shine and to research in epilepsy and in diseases were bothering people - like insanity and other things.

*Matthew Jones<sup>93</sup> of Yafesville, died 1977 - Bachelor - 44 \$20,000 to sal. army & Red cross + \$500 St Pauls Hosp. Ch. Sunburg. Organized to suppress to mine some fields of his 88 Acre farm in Gates County!*

Do you know that Romans 1:29 says that is the sin of this Godless world and society, that covetousness is the very opposite of the love of God. And in Luke 12:15 this sin of the man that we have been talking about of material things, who thinks that the value of life lies in the number of things that a man possesses, the man whose one desire is to get. And never even thinks of giving.

Now those whose exploit - you can take just a little piece of money and put it up before your eyes and it will shut out the sunlight. The matter of greed as Lightfoot says, is in a man's heart ready to sacrifice even one's neighbor and one's self just for money.

In all the ages, this word covetousness in the Greek is an ugly word, and always as a basic idea behind it -