

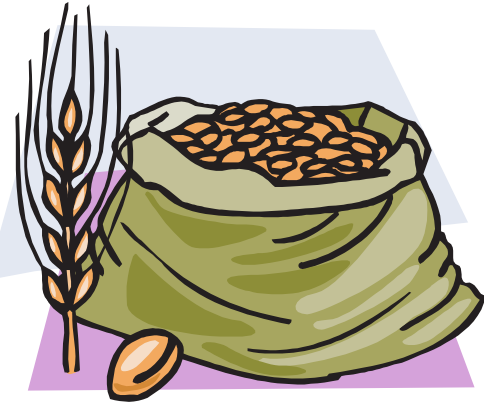


# The Rich Fool

Luke 12:13-21

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." - Hebrews 13:5

In Luke 12:13-21, Jesus describes a certain wealthy landowner as a fool. This week we will look at what it is that makes him foolish, and we will learn how we can store up treasures in heaven. Pray each day and talk to God about what you are learning.



## Day #1: Heavenly Treasures

When a man in the crowd asked Jesus to settle his dispute, why did Jesus answer with a story about greed? It might seem that Jesus did not give a straight answer, but actually, His answer went straight to the heart of the matter.

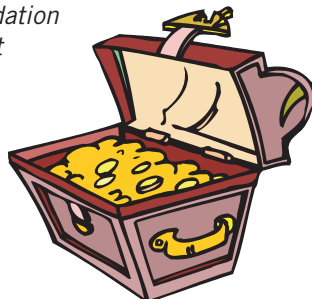
Let's look at at the man who interrupted Jesus. He was more than likely a younger brother who wanted to divide his inheritance right down the middle. The custom of the day was for the oldest or "first born" son to get a double-portion of the family inheritance (Deuteronomy 21:16-17). Jesus sees into the heart of men. 1 Chronicles 28:9 says, "The Lord looks deep down inside every heart. He understands the real reasons for everything you think." Jesus knew this interruption was prompted by greed on the younger brother's part because he did not like the idea of his brother getting more than he got.

Jesus told him that the things we have on earth are not important. He said it is foolish for anyone to store things away for himself, and not be rich in God's eyes. In Matthew 6:19-20, Jesus teaches, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves **treasures in heaven**, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal." Everything on earth will fade away. Things we do for God's kingdom will last forever.

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up **treasure** for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life."

- 1 Timothy 6:17-19 (NIV)

Pray and ask God to show you daily how you can store up treasures in heaven.



## Day #2: Watch Out!

Jesus began His story with a warning. "Watch out! Be on your guard against wanting to have more and more things." Why would Jesus specifically say to watch out for this? The Greek word used is **beware** - to guard something so that it will stay safe. But what is it we are supposed to guard?

Jesus wants us to guard our heart. Proverbs 4:23 says, "Above all else, guard your heart. It is where your life comes from."

No one can serve two masters at the same time. He will hate one of them and love the other. Or he will be faithful to one and dislike the other. **You can't serve God and money at the same time.** - Matthew 6:24

Could a football player play in a game while taking direction from both his coach and the other team's coach? Certainly not. Both coaches would be competing for the loyalty of the player. Likewise, the love of money competes for the love you should have for God.

When we are greedy and when we covet (want what other people have), it is like a trap. Our thoughts linger on how we can get these things. Our mind dwells on what it would be like to have more things. Colossians 3:5 even calls greed "idolatry." That means to worship a false god. If we spend our time and effort thinking about "stuff" that we want, we are actually worshipping that "stuff"!

How sad that is! Would we actually choose to worship an object instead of the Creator of the universe? Would we worship an I-Pod, a Game Cube, a new pair of shoes, or a cool car? Did any of those things create even one blade of grass? Can any of those things talk, or love, or bring a person to life? When we look at it in these terms, it seems ridiculous. But our minds are prone to "want." That is why Jesus warns us to "Watch out!"

Pray and ask God to help you guard your heart. Ask Him to keep you from the temptation to worship anything other than Himself!

## Day #3: Security

It is certain that the rich man's storehouses were plenty big enough to store all that his family needed to be comfortable. But the man became greedy. He decided to build bigger storehouses so that he could pack in as much grain as possible. Then he would have plenty to use and probably plenty to sell at a high price in a year when crops were not so good. The man believed his life would be easy and free from trouble.

Many people today think along the same lines as this man. Billions of lottery tickets are sold each year. That's millions of people, each wanting a chance to become instantly rich. The lottery advertisers call it "a lifetime of security." How foolish to think our life would be trouble-free & easy if we didn't have to worry about money. There have been many studies that show lottery winners are not any happier after they win big money than before they won. And every wealthy person in the world has plenty of other problems that money can't solve.

No, our security can't come from a lottery ticket or from savings in a bank. It HAS to come from **knowing** the God who will always provide for us! No matter what we think we have lined up (money in the bank, a great job...) that can always change. But God's love and His presence with us NEVER changes. Hebrews 13:8 assures us, "*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*" He will always take care of our needs. We can count on Him doing what is best for us. (Romans 8:28)

In Luke 12:24, Jesus told His disciples, "*Think about the ravens. They don't plant or gather crops. They don't have any storerooms at all. But God feeds them. You are worth much more than birds!*" He continued, "*Don't spend time thinking about what you will eat or drink. Don't worry about it. People who are ungodly run after all of those things. Your Father knows that you need them. But put God's kingdom first. Then those other things will also be given to you.*" (Luke 12:29-31)

Thank God for taking care of all of your needs. He will ALWAYS be the same. He will ALWAYS take care of you.

## Day #4: Contentment

The dictionary defines greed: an excessive desire to acquire or possess more than one needs or deserves. In other words - to WANT more than you NEED. We have all felt that emotion. Describe a time when you really wanted more than you needed. Greed is a centuries-old problem, but what are some of the influences today that add to our greed problem? Television and radio commercials flaunt items that advertisers want us to buy. Stores mail catalogs with big glossy pictures right to our homes. And sometimes, we simply see what our friends have, and it makes us want more "stuff."

The opposite of greed is contentment. Being content is being satisfied with what you have. Wow! Who among us today can say that he is completely content? In fact, many of us keep a running list in our minds of things we want. We have heard Jesus' warning against greed. What does the Bible say about contentment?

*But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.*

## Day #4 continued:

*But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction.* - 1 Timothy 6:6-9

In Philippians 4:12, Paul said, "*I know what it's like not to have what I need. I also know what it's like to have more than I need. I have learned the secret of being content no matter what happens. I am content whether I am well fed or hungry. I am content whether I have more than enough or not enough.*" This man had been through just about everything. He had been rich, poor, beaten, hungry, and imprisoned (2 Corinthians 6:3-5). And what was the secret to Paul's contentment? He depended on Jesus! "I can do everything through Him who gives me strength." (Philippians 4:13)

Pray and ask God to help you to be content with what He has provided for you. When you watch TV, make a habit of saying, "that's greed!" when commercials try to lure you into being discontent with what you have.

## Day #5: Taking Credit

The rich farmer thought he had accomplished something pretty great. He thought he was responsible for his abundant crop, and he thought he had a great plan for what to do with it. Look at the verses below. In just a couple sentences, how many times does the rich farmer refer to himself?

*He thought to himself, "What should I do? I don't have any place to store my crops." Then he said, "This is what I'll do. I will tear down my storerooms and build bigger ones. I will store all my grain and my other things in them. I'll say to myself, 'You have plenty of good things stored away for many years. Take life easy. Eat, drink, and have a good time.' "* - Luke 12:17-19

But how did Jesus describe it? *He said, "A certain rich man's land produced a good crop."* (Luke 12:16) The land produced the crop. Who created the land? Who created the seeds? Who made the rain fall and who made the sun shine? God did! (Genesis 1:10,11; Jeremiah 14:22; 31:35)

The man took full credit for the crops and planned to hoard every bit of it. He did not stop to give credit to the Creator who blessed him so richly. And he did not give a thought to giving any of the grain back as an offering to God. He could have given much of it to his neighbors in need. He could have sent it to the widows in his town. He should have prayed and asked God for wisdom in how to use the abundant crop.

The landowner thought he had devised a perfect plan, but God knew otherwise. That very night, his life on earth was going to end. How many other opportunities did this rich man miss? More than likely, he had spent a lifetime without thinking about how God had blessed him and without showing appreciation to God.

Get out a piece of paper and make a list of God's blessings in your life. Pray and thank Him for providing for you. He is the source of every good gift! (James 1:17)

