

**ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S ANGLICAN PRO-CATHEDRAL IN THE TOWN OF TONAWANDA**

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Scripture: Luke 12:13-21

***"A Fool and His Money"***

**THE SUBJECT OF MONEY**

I want to talk to you about a subject that's on everybody's mind and that's the subject of money. We can't get away from it, can we? From Wall Street, with the ups and downs of the stock market, to Washington DC and the ongoing bickering over budgets and deficit spending; from Madison Avenue and the advertisers who tell us to buy their products if we want to be successful, to Main Street where everyday Americans are just trying to find ways to make ends meet, it seems that the subject of money always takes center stage. The truth is in today's world money represents our wealth; and without money, we can't really live this life.

I heard about a man who came into a large inheritance, several hundred thousand dollars. But he was really up in age and had a bad heart. So his family thought it not wise to bluntly tell him he had so much money, for fear he might have a heart attack. So they said, "Well, let's get the preacher. He's good with words. We'll ask him to tell him." And so their pastor went over to tell the old man. And the pastor thought rather than telling him just straight out he'd kind of ease into it with a question. He said, "Grandpa, what would you do if you had \$300,000 dollars?" He said Pastor, "I would give it all to the church building fund." The pastor fainted.

You can tell a lot about a person's attitude and their character by their relationship to money. God knows that money is important. But money is not the real issue. It's how we view money and how we use it that's the real issue. And we can get wrong ideas about money. Some think that money brings happiness. It doesn't. Maybe temporary happiness. It can buy almost anything but it can't buy love, joy or peace. It can take you almost anywhere but heaven. Other people think money brings security. It doesn't. Still others think that money is sinful. It isn't. It is a necessary means of exchange. God ordained it so. The Bible doesn't say that money is the root of all evil. Contrary to popular opinion, the Bible says, ***"It's the love of money that is the root of all kinds of evil."*** (1 Tim. 6:10)

**GOD'S PERSPECTIVE ON WEALTH**

In today's Gospel lesson from Luke, Jesus gives us all we need to know when it comes to how we should view money and how we should use it. Let's now look again at **Luke 12:13-21**:

***Someone in the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me." 14But He said to him, "Man, who appointed Me a judge or arbitrator over you?" 15Then He said to them, "Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions." 16And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man was very productive. 17"And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?' 18"Then he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 19'And I will say to my soul, "Soul,***

*you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.” 20“But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?’ 21“So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”*

Recall from last time that I said I would be preaching on a specific passage with the approach of what is called Inductive Bible Study asking the following questions: 1) What does the passage say? (Observation) 2) What does it mean? (Interpretation) And 3) How does it apply to my life? (Application)

First, we have a man in the crowd asking Jesus to do his bidding when it comes to his inheritance. Rabbis were often asked to settle legal questions in families but Jesus refused to get involved. Why? He refused for two reasons. First, Jesus did not come to earth to settle personal squabbles. He came to reveal the Kingdom of God. And second, no answer that he gave the man would solve the real problem. Jesus knew that both brothers were guilty of greed. In verse 14, the “you” is plural. That means that Jesus was directing his answer to *both* brothers. Jesus did not come to serve our wants; He came to meet our needs. And as long as there was covetousness in the brothers’ hearts, they never would see their need for salvation – to be saved from their own selfishness. It is why Jesus then tells the one brother and the crowd listening, ***“Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.”***

It is a stern warning against not just greed but every form of greed. What is greed? Greed is the unquenchable thirst to get more and more of something we think we need to be truly satisfied. It can be money, material things, power or prestige. And the opposite of greed is generosity. To be generous is to be giving. Greed is about just being concerned about self. Generosity is about reaching out to others. To be greedy is to be selfish. To be generous is to be selfless. And not only do such things reflect the character of a person, but there is a spiritual truth as well that bears witness to the command of Jesus to guard against every form of greed. He says ***“for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of possessions.”***

Life should not be simply about stuff and material things. And yet, that’s what atheists, communists and evolutionists would have us believe. Such folks contend that life is simply about what you can perceive with your five senses. We are just flesh and blood and this is it. So if that is the case, then all that matters is that you have enough; and if you have an abundance, that is even better. Not so! Says the Creator of heaven and earth. Life is not about what we possess; life is about who we know and do we love who we know. Do we know and love the Lord of heaven and earth who loved us first? Do we know and love those in our families and community? Do we value our relationships over the material world?

And then Jesus tells a parable. Recall a parable is an earthly story with a spiritual meaning that conveys timeless truths about God’s Kingdom. While parables were not actual events, I am sure that in many of the parables you could find similar examples from real life. In other words, the attitude we find in the rich man and his subsequent demise no doubt has been found in many a person throughout history.

### **A TIMELESS PARABLE**

Let’s now look again at the parable. First, we have a rich man and his land. Not only was the man rich but he was becoming richer! He had a problem of too much wealth. Some here might say, “I wish I

had that problem.” But what would you do if all of a sudden you had all that wealth? The truth is there are perils to prosperity. Riches can choke out the Word of God; they can lead to more temptation and create a false sense of security. If you indeed had such wealth, would you first praise God and then ask Him what He would want you to do with that money? We might think we could handle it; but unless we are cultivating generosity in our hearts now, we really don’t know what would happen. There have been many lotto winners who have won millions whose lives have been simply ruined by their new-found wealth.

Notice how the rich man goes about handling his wealth. It is all about what he is going to do. What he is going to decide. There is no mention or thought given to the Lord. Notice how many times the rich man says “I?” In fact, there are eleven first-person personal pronouns in the parable alone! He has no thought of God or others. He simply is going to build bigger places to hold his wealth; and he is going to take his ease, eat drink and be merry. He saw his wealth as an opportunity to only please himself. Now I know I said earlier that money can’t buy happiness, but in some cases it can if you want temporary happiness; if you want to live on a purely material level. But when that happens, eventually the things that are most important in life – the things that money can’t buy – things like love, joy and peace are lost. Just take a trip out to Hollywood and you’ll see what I mean.

But Jesus isn’t just speaking to rich folks, He is speaking to us. In fact, just as an aside, by virtue that we are American citizens makes us richer than 90% of the rest of the world. To most in the world, our homes would be considered mansions. Our freedoms, our abundance of food, and so many creature comforts are incredible blessings. It’s why so many want to come here. But the way of the flesh, the world and the devil is to take care of Number One! – yourself. And in God’s eyes that is the way of the fool.

For what do we hear next? **“But God...”** The two most important words in the English language, but God. For the wages of sin is death.... **but God** sent His Son to die on the cross for us. The wicked may prosper for a time **but God** will smite the wicked. Physical death may seem to be the end **but God** is the one who gives us eternal life. With man it is impossible **but God** makes all things possible!

In the case of the rich man, the “but God” was not good. The rich man ignored God at his own peril. His life was cut short. All of our days are numbered; each one here is going to die. Death runs in my family and death runs in your family and we will not escape it. None of us knows for how long we are going to be on earth. But that day is coming and it came a bit sooner for the rich man. And he would hear those dreadful words from the Almighty and Living God, the One who made heaven and earth. The all-powerful and eternal God – **“You fool...” This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?”**

Can you imagine hearing such words from God Himself? There is nothing the rich man could say or do. His time was up. He was a fool, not because of the money he had or even because he wanted to save for the future. He was a fool because he lost sight that ultimately everything he had came from God and that life is not about simply satisfying our own needs and wants, but it is about serving God and others in grateful obedience for what God has done for us. He lived without God and he died without God. And he took nothing with him. The Apostle Paul wrote in **1 Tim. 6:7 “We brought nothing into the world and**

*we can take nothing out of it."* Job said *"Naked I came into the world and naked I will depart."* The real tragedy here is not simply that the rich man squandered his wealth in selfish pursuits but that he lost eternal life!

### **TO BE RICH TOWARD GOD...**

So I ask, "What does this mean for you and me?" All of us, due to our sinful nature, have a propensity to be selfish and self-serving. We all have a greedy nature to some extent. The only one who can change our hearts and show how to truly live generously is Jesus Christ. ***"To be rich toward God"*** is to recognize that God has given us everything in life, and He is the ONLY One who can give us eternal life. And there is no greater gift. Moreover, everything we have in this life is on loan from God. It is to be used for His glory and the good of others. We can certainly enjoy the things of this world as long as they are done so according to God's will and His Kingdom. It is why Jesus then tells us in the next passage in **Luke 12:22-34**, ***"not to worry about what we are going to wear or eat...but seek His kingdom and these things will be added to you."***

Now if God wants to give us His Kingdom and He has already given us His Son, do we need to worry about the stuff of this life? Do we need to worry about having enough money? Not if we are trusting the Lord and seeking His righteousness and His Kingdom and His will.

Jesus said further in both the gospels of Matthew and Luke, ***"Don't build up for yourselves treasures on earth, but build up for yourselves treasure in heaven, for where your treasure is there will your heart be."***

So I ask, "Where is your treasure? Is it here on earth? Can it be stored in barns and banks? Or is it in the things of God? Is it in His Kingdom and the work of His Kingdom? Is it in people? Are you investing in the lives of others so that they can see Jesus and know that He loves them both by reaching out to their spiritual needs as well as their physical needs? Can your treasure be seen in heaven?

At the end of our lives, there will only be one of two responses that we will hear from our Lord Jesus Christ. The rich man heard ***"You fool!"*** I want to hear, ***"Well done thou good and faithful servant, come inherit the Kingdom prepared for you."*** (Mt. 25:23)

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, AMEN!