

Luke 12:13-26

¹³ Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”

¹⁴ Jesus replied, “Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?” ¹⁵ 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.”

¹⁶ And he told them this parable: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. ¹⁷ He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’

¹⁸ “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. ¹⁹ And I’ll say to myself, ‘You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.’”

²⁰ “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?’ ²¹ “This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.”

²² Then Jesus said to his disciples: “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. ²³ For life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. ²⁴ Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! ²⁵ Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life^{lul}? ²⁶ Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?”

THERE ONCE WAS A WEALTHY MAN WHOSE YOUNG SON HAD JUST ABOUT EVERY POSSESSION HE COULD POSSIBLY WANT.

HIS FATHER, HOWEVER DESIRED TO TEACH THE BOY THAT NOT EVERYONE WAS AS FORTUNATE AS HE, AND SO HE ARRANGED AN UNUSUAL FATHER/SON WEEKEND TRIP.

THEY TRAVELED INTO THE NEARBY COUNTRYSIDE TO STAY WITH A LOW-INCOME FARM FAMILY.

UPON THEIR RETURN HOME THE DAD ASKED HIS SON ABOUT THE EXPERIENCE- SPECIFICALLY WONDERING WHAT THE BOY LEARNED.

THE LAD’S RESPONSE SURPRISED HIS FATHER GREATLY, FOR HE SAID: “I LEARNED WE HAVE ONE DOG AND THEY HAVE FOUR, WE HAVE A LARGE SWIMMING POOL- THEY HAVE A BIG CREEK.”

“WE HAVE A LARGE GARDEN AND A HUGE LAWN, WHILE THEY HAVE FIELDS AND A FRONT YARD THAT REACHES THE HORIZON.

WE HAVE EXPENSIVE LIGHTS IN OUR YARD- THEY HAVE A STAR FILLED SKY.”

THE BOY PAUSED A MOMENT, THEN LOOKED INTO HIS FATHER’S EYES, AND MUCH TO THE MAN’S SHOCK SAID- “THANK YOU DAD FOR SHOWING ME HOW POOR WE ARE.”

THIS STORY ILLUSTRATES OUR PERSPECTIVE ABOUT WHAT IS VALUABLE, CAN DETERMINE WHAT IT IS WE THINK WE HAVE OR LACK.

THIS BRINGS US TO THE MAN IN THE STORY JESUS TOLD. HE FOOLISHLY PLACED ALL HIS TRUST IN HIMSELF.

AND HE WAS CONFIDENT IN A GOOD FUTURE BASED ON THE GREAT HARVEST AND THE WEALTH IT BROUGHT HIM.

HIS THOUGHTS AND PLANS INDICATE A SELF-CENTEREDNESS THAT GOVERNED HIS PERSPECTIVE ON RICHES AND POSSESSIONS.

THE TRAGIC THING IS THAT WHILE THE RICH MAN HAD BARNS FILLED WITH GRAIN AND THE WEALTH IT BROUGHT HIM, HE WAS STARVING SPIRITUALLY.

HIS BIGGEST MISTAKE WAS TO THINK OF HIMSELF SO MUCH THAT HE HAD NO INCLINATION TO THINK ABOUT OTHERS OR EVEN GOD.

THIS BRINGS US TO THE TURNING POINT OF THE STORY WHERE THE FOCUS TURNS FROM THE FOOL'S THOUGHTS AND WORDS, TO THOSE OF GOD.

THE PHRASE: "BUT GOD SAID TO HIM", CHANGED EVERYTHING. IT REMINDS US GOD THINKS ABOUT EVERYONE, INCLUDING THOSE WHO PAY NO MIND TO HIM, LIKE FOOLISH RICH MAN

HE WAS MATERIALLY RICH, AND YET WAS IMPOVERISHED BY NOT HAVING LOVE FOR GOD, OR OTHER PEOPLE.

THE POINT JESUS WAS MAKING WAS NOT TO IMPLY THAT THE FOOLISH RICH MAN DIED BECAUSE GOD CAUSED HIM TO DIE IN PUNISHMENT FOR HIS SIN.

NOR WAS IT TO TEACH, EITHER THAT WORLDLY POSSESSIONS- OR ENJOYING LIFE- ARE THINGS TO ALWAYS AVOID.

BUT RATHER, HIS POINT WAS THAT SUCH THINGS ARE NOT WHAT WE SHOULD CHERISH IN OUR HEARTS.

TRULY, IT IS THE VALUE WE PLACE ON WEALTH AND PLEASURE, AND THE ENERGY WE USE TO GAIN AND TO HOLD ON TO SUCH THINGS, THAT CAN CAUSE US TO SIN.

IT MAY HELP OUR INSIGHT IN THIS MATTER IF WE LOOK AT THE LARGER CONTEXT OF THE PARABLE. JESUS IN LUKE 12, HAD ISSUED WARNINGS ABOUT HYPOCRISY.

JESUS ALSO TOLD THE CROWD THEY SHOULD WORRY LESS ABOUT WHAT MAY KILL THEIR BODIES- AND MORE ABOUT THE LOSS OF THEIR SOULS.

HE REMINDED THEM GOD, WHO VALUES THE SPARROW, EVEN MORE SO CARES FOR AND PROVIDES FOR THEM.

JESUS ALSO SAID THAT THOSE WHO ACKNOWLEDGE HIM, HE WILL ACKNOWLEDGE BEFORE HIS FATHER, BUT WILL DISOWN THOSE WHO DISOWN HIM.

JESUS PROMISED FORGIVENESS TO THOSE WHO REPENT. AND FINALLY, HE PROMISED THE HOLY SPIRIT TO THOSE WHO FOLLOW HIM.

IT WAS RIGHT AFTER THIS VERY SIGNIFICANT AND SERIOUS TEACHING A MAN CAUGHT THE SAVIOR'S ATTENTION AND DEMANDED: "TELL MY BROTHER TO DIVIDE THE INHERITANCE WITH ME."

NOW ASKING A RABBI TO MAKE A RULING IN A FAMILY DISPUTE WAS NOTHING UNUSUAL. IN FACT, IT WAS A COMMON PRACTICE OF THAT TIME.

EVEN SO, THE MAN'S REQUEST, HAD HE SIMPLY ASKED FOR JESUS TO ARBITRATE BETWEEN HIM AND HIS BROTHER, WOULD HAVE BEEN BAD ENOUGH, SINCE IT SPOKE AS IT WAS DURING JESUS' TEACHING THAT DAY.

BUT THAT WAS NOT WHAT HE WANTED. INSTEAD, THE MAN DEMANDED JESUS, WITHOUT HEARING ANY OF THE FACTS, TO RULE IN HIS FAVOR.

THE YOUNGER BROTHER TRIED TO GET JESUS TO TAKE SIDES IN THE FAMILY DISPUTE, WHICH SHOWED HIS IGNORANCE OF JESUS' TEACHINGS.

HIS FAILURE TO LISTEN TO JESUS WAS MOST LIKELY DUE TO THE FACT HE ONLY THOUGHT ABOUT HIMSELF AND WHAT HE WANTED.

THEREFORE, THE SAVIOR RESPONDS WITH A STORY MEANT TO REDIRECT THAT MAN'S FOCUS.

THE PARABLE OF THE RICH FOOL WAS ISSUED AS A WARNING TO THE YOUNGER BROTHER THAT HE WAS ON DANGEROUS GROUND- SPIRITUALLY.

BUT IT WAS ALSO A WAY TO REINFORCE TO THE CROWD THE THINGS JESUS HAD BEEN SAYING TO THEM THAT VERY DAY.

THE PARABLE ITSELF IS WORTHY OF FURTHER INVESTIGATION PARTICULARLY CONCERNING WHAT IT DOES NOT SAY.

JESUS' STORY DOES NOT SAY THE RICH FOOL WAS A BAD MAN. THERE IS NO INDICATION HE GAINED HIS LAND OR OTHER WEALTH BY THEFT OR DECEIT.

HE IS NOT DESCRIBED AS SOMEONE WHO ABUSED HIS SERVANTS, OR CHEATED HIS HIRED HELP OUT OF THE WAGES THEY EARNED.

INSTEAD, THE INFORMATION WE ARE GIVEN BY JESUS IMPLIES THE RICH MAN GAINED HIS WEALTH HONESTLY AND FAIRLY. SO HIS SINFULNESS WAS NOT DUE TO HOW HE GOT RICH.

THE ABUNDANT HARVEST ITSELF IS ANOTHER HINT FOR US. THERE ARE TWO WAYS TO PERCEIVE THAT GOOD FORTUNE.

IT COULD BE SEEN-EITHER AS A LUCKY TURN OF EVENTS, OR AS A BLESSING FROM GOD.

IT SEEMS OBVIOUS FROM THE FOOL'S THOUGHTS, HE LEFT GOD COMPLETELY OUT OF THE EQUATION, SINCE ALL HIS THOUGHTS FOCUSED SOLELY ON HIMSELF.

NOTICE THE ABUNDANCE OF THE FIRST-PERSON PRONOUNS -- "I" AND "MY", FOUND IN THE PARABLE.

AS WE HEARD, THE FOOL DID NOT HAVE A SINGLE THOUGHT OF GRATITUDE TO GOD, OR A CONCERN FOR NEEDS OF HIS NEIGHBORS.

THE MAN IN THE PARABLE REMINDS ME OF SOME OF THE CHARACTERS IN THE CARTOON MOVIE "FINDING NEMO".

IN THE MOVIE, WHENEVER SEAGULLS CAME ACROSS SOMETHING EDIBLE THE ENTIRE FLOCK MINDLESSLY SQUAWKED THE SAME THING OVER AND OVER AGAIN.

THEY KEPT SAYING: "MINE, MINE, MINE", RIGHT BEFORE EACH BIRD TRIED TO BEAT THE OTHERS TO THE FOOD.

SIMILARLY, IN THE PARABLE JESUS TOLD- ALL THE FOOL COULD THINK ABOUT WAS: "MINE, MINE, MINE".

BUT UNLIKE SEAGULLS, HE SHOULD HAVE HAD THOUGHTS FOR OTHERS BEYOND HIMSELF.

INDEED- HE DID NOT EVEN NEED THE EXCESS HARVEST FOR HIS SURVIVAL- SINCE HIS BARNs WERE ALREADY FILLED TO CAPACITY.

THIS MAN NOT ONLY HAD MORE GRAIN THAN HE NEEDED- EVEN FOR FUTURE SURVIVAL- HE HAD MUCH MORE THAN HE COULD STORE.

HE ALSO HAD SEVERAL CHOICES HE COULD HAVE MADE, BESIDES BUILDING BIGGER BARNs IN ORDER TO KEEP IT ALL FOR HIMSELF.

HE COULD HAVE GIVEN SOME OF THE EXCESS HARVEST AS AN EXTRA OFFERING TO GOD- IN THANKSGIVING FOR THE ABUNDANCE HE RECEIVED.

HE MIGHT HAVE GIVEN SOME OF THE FOOD TO THE POOR, OR EVEN SOLD GRAIN AT A LOW PRICE TO THOSE WHO WOULD NOT TAKE CHARITY.

FINALLY, HE COULD HAVE EVEN APPROACHED FAMILY MEMBERS LIVING NEARBY AND OFFERED THEM A PORTION OF THE HARVEST.

BUT HE DID NOT EVEN THINK OF DOING ANY OF THOSE THINGS WITH HIS ABUNDANCE. ALL HE THOUGHT ABOUT WAS HOW FORTUNATE HE WAS.

THUS, THIS MAN'S THOUGHTS AND PLANS REVEALED THE DEPTHS OF HIS POVERTY.

HE WAS NOT ONLY LACKING IN LOVE FOR GOD, BUT ALSO IN LOVE FOR HIS FELLOW HUMAN BEINGS.

HIS POVERTY IN LOVE FOR OTHERS WAS SHOWN IN HIS SELF-CENTERED PLANS.

AND HIS POVERTY TOWARDS GOD WAS REVEALED IN A FAILURE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE ABUNDANT HARVEST AS BLESSING FROM THE LORD.

THAT FAILURE ALSO PREVENTED HIM FROM FEELING OR SHOWING GRATITUDE TO GOD.

WE CAN SUMMARIZE THE FOOL'S PROBLEM IN THREE MAIN WAYS: 1. HE LEFT GOD OUT OF HIS PLANS; 2. HE FOCUSED ONLY IN HIMSELF; 3. HE STORED THE WRONG KIND OF TREASURE.

BASICALLY, THAT FOOLISH MAN HAD NO CONCEPT GOD CARED FOR HIM; OR CARED WHAT HE DID AND DID NOT DO.

CLEARLY-HE MIGHT HAVE BENEFITED FROM HEARING JESUS' DECLARATION IN LUKE 12:7

"...THE VERY HAIRS ON YOUR HEAD ARE NUMBERED. DO NOT BE AFRAID, YOU ARE WORTH MORE THAN MANY SPARROWS."

BUT SADLY, THE RICH FOOL DID NOT EVEN CONSIDER THE FACT HIS LIFE WAS IN GOD'S HANDS AND GOD'S CONTROL, RATHER THAN HIS OWN.

HE WOULD NOT BE LIKELY TO PRAY WORDS OF THE LORD'S PRAYER: "GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD", FOR TWO REASONS.

FIRST, IF HE PRAYED AT ALL HE WOULD BE SAYING "I" AND "MY".

AND SECONDLY, IT IS CLEAR HE FELT HE DID NOT NEED ANYTHING FROM ANYONE, INCLUDING GOD.

FURTHERMORE, HE DID NOT CONSIDER HIMSELF TO BE A STEWARD OF WHAT THE LORD HAD GIVEN HIM, BUT THE SOLE OWNER OF WHAT HE EARNED.

THIS IS WHY, HE FELT NO GRATITUDE TOWARDS GOD, NOR ANY KIND OF OBLIGATION TO BE GENEROUS TO OTHERS.

HE INVESTED NOTHING IN HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LORD, AND IN THAT SENSE, HE DIED A VERY POOR MAN.

HE WAS IMPOVERISHED BECAUSE HE EITHER FORGOT, OR NEVER CONSIDERED, THAT INVESTING FOR ETERNITY IS NOT FOUND IN WEALTH OR POWER, BUT IN FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD.

CONVERSELY, JESUS' POINT WAS THAT THOSE WHO ARE RICH TOWARDS GOD, ARE PEOPLE WHO WILL INVEST IN THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LORD.

THE PSALMIST WHO WROTE PSALM 49 UNDERSTOOD THIS TRUTH.

HE REFLECTED ON THE REALITY OF LIFE AND DEATH FOR BOTH THE RICH AND THE POOR.

AND THEN HE TURNED TO GOD, TRUSTING HIS FATE TO HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LORD, RATHER THAN TO ANY WEALTH OR OTHER WORLDLY RESOURCES.

THEREFORE, HE WROTE: "BUT THE LORD WILL RANSOM MY SOUL FROM THE POWER OF SHEOL, FOR HE WILL RECEIVE ME."

SOME LYRICS OF A SONG SUMMARIZE THE POINT OF JESUS' TEACHING, AS WELL AS BIBLICAL WISDOM IN GENERAL:

"WITH ETERNITY'S VALUES IN VIEW LORD, WITH ETERNITY'S VALUES VIEW- MAY I DO EACH DAY'S WORK FOR JESUS, WITH ETERNITY'S VALUES IN VIEW."

THE WORDS OF THIS SONG DO NOT SUGGEST IT IS WRONG TO GIVE THOUGHT FOR OUR NEEDS OR EVEN OUR WANTS.

INSTEAD, THEY OFFER A DAILY PRAYER FOR US AS CHRISTIANS TO REMEMBER.

WE ARE REDEEMED BY CHRIST, AND WE CALLED TO LIVE GRATEFULLY FOR THE PRICELESS GIFT JESUS PROVIDED.

AND GRATEFUL LIVING INCLUDES SERVING THE LORD WITH OUR RESOURCES, INCLUDING OUR TIME, TALENTS, ENERGY, AND MATERIAL GOODS.

LET US PRAY:

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