

## The Rich Fool

### Introduction.

1. Luke records these words in Luke 12:13-14.

LUK 12:13 And someone in the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me."

LUK 12:14 But He said to him, "Man, who appointed Me a judge or arbiter over you?"

- a. The account of The Rich Fool is unique and is found only in the gospel of Luke.
- b. Someone from the crowd asks Jesus to be an "arbiter" between he and his brother, but Jesus rejected that role.
- c. Jesus indicated He did not come to settle such disputes. (Lk. 12:14).
- d. He had come to seek and save the lost. (Lk. 19:10).

2. Jesus uses this occasion to warn against "every form of greed" [covetousness] (Lk. 12:15).

LUK 12:15 And 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."

- "pleonexia" [pleh ah neks ee ah] - "greediness, covetousness."
  - Lit. "every form of greediness or covetousness."
- a. What the brother wanted could be settled by the courts.
    - 1) The Old Testament gave clear teaching regarding the inheritance of property. (Deut. 21:15-17; Num. 27:1-11; 36:7-9).
    - 2) The circumstances of the dispute are not given, and are not important to the lesson Jesus wanted to stress.
  - b. What was needed more was a lesson on how possessions relate to life's purpose.
  - c. Jesus rejected the request because it arose from greed and greed is a very dangerous attitude for the one seeking to please God.

3. Jesus proceeded to give what we know as "The Parable of the Rich Fool." (Lk. 12:16-20).

LUK 12:16 And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a certain rich man was very productive.

LUK 12:17 "And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store **my** crops?'

LUK 12:18 "And 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.

LUK 12:19 '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.'"

LUK 12:20 "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?'

- a. Note the parable is filled with personal pronouns.
- b. The rich fool uses the personal pronoun "I" 6 times and the possessive pronoun "my" 5 times.
- c. No one else is mentioned - neither God or man.

### **Rich Man**

**12:16 And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a certain rich man was very productive.**

- "chora" [**koh** rah] - "field, grounds, land." Though not stated, the implication is the rich man had a lot of land.
  - "very productive" is literally "the land of a certain rich man bore well." NIV has "produced a good crop."
  - The context makes it clear that he had an exceptional crop.
1. The man was rich at the beginning of the story and will get even richer after his great crop.
  2. He was unable to use all his riches, so he decided to hoard and store the excess.
  3. He believes he is fixed for life!

### **Rich Fool Reasons To Himself**

**12:17 "And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?'**

1. He was talking to himself.
2. We sometimes do this. This can be a good thing or an evil thing.
  - a. It is good to think and speak to ourselves positive things.
  - b. It is evil and destructive to think and speak to ourselves negative and evil things.

**12:18 "And 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.**

1. "Barn" [a granary or storehouse] occurs 6 times in the New Testament. (Matt. 3:12; 6:26; 13:30; Lk. 3:17; 12:18,24). It is from the Greek word "apotheke" [ah pah **thay** kay] means "granary, storehouse, barn."
2. The words "all my corn" means "grain" (wheat, barley), not maize or Indian corn.
  - a. "sitos" [**see** tahs] - See Matt. 3:12; 13:25, 29, 30; Mk. 4:28.
  - b. The exact nature of the "grain" is not important to the parable.
  - c. The point of the parable is his attitude toward his riches and what he did with them.
3. "My goods" may indicate that he possessed more than just farm produce.

## The Rich Man's Folly

12:19 **'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."**

1. He could have said, "I shall be able to give more to God and help those less fortunate than me."
2. The two greatest commandments were not a part of his life. (Matt. 22:37-39).
3. Neither was the Golden Rule on his mind. (Matt. 7:12).
4. He thought only of self - me, me, me.
5. The needs of the poor were not included in his plans.
  - a. Palestine was filled with poor people and crippled people.
  - b. It was filled with orphans, widows, and others in need.
6. "Take your ease, eat, drink {and} be merry" describes the hedonistic life-style he planned to pursue.
  - a. His exact plans are not revealed.
  - b. Pleasure was going to be his pursuit.
7. This is the philosophy Paul advocated for Christians to pursue if the dead are not raised.

"If from human motives I fought with wild beasts at Ephesus, what does it profit me? If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." (1 Cor. 15:32).

8. The Christian is one who seeks the kingdom first and sets his mind on things that are above. (Matt. 6:33; Col. 3:1,2).

## God Speaks

12:20 **"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?'**

1. God calls this rich man "a fool."
  - a. The rich fool forgot: (1) God (2) Others (3) Death (4) Source of real happiness (5) A man is more than what he owns.
  - b. He had neglected the most important things in his pursuit of wealth and pleasure.
2. The word "soul" denotes his life and his immortal spirit.
  - a. It has both meaning in this parable. He lost his life and his soul.
  - b. The Greek "psuche" [psoo **khay**] can mean "life." (Matt. 2:20; 6:25).

c. The word can also mean “soul” referring to the immortal part of man.

1) The Bible teaches a man has a “soul” (Matt. 10:28; Heb. 6:19; Jas. 1:21; 5:20; 1 Pet. 1:9; 2:11; 3 Jn. 3:2).

MAT 10:28 "And do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

HEB 6:19 This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil,

JAM 1:21 Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.

JAM 5:20 let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death, and will cover a multitude of sins.

1PE 1:9 obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.

1PE 2:11 Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts, which wage war against the soul.

3JO 1:2 Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers.

2) The rich man and so many others either deny or forget that they have a soul.

d. We need to put the salvation of our souls above every other consideration. (Matt. 16:26).

MAT 16:26 "For what will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"

3. “This {very} night” conveys emphatically there was no time available to amend his ways.

a. Most people believe they will have time to change, to repent, to amend their ways, to get right with God.

b. This was not the case with this rich man, and no one knows he/she will have time to made the changes lacking in his or her’s life.

4. It is foolish and fallacious to assume we have any time but the moment we are experiencing. (Prov. 27:1; Jas. 4:13-17).

5. Even if we live a long life, the heart can be hardened by “the deceitfulness of sin.” (Heb. 3:13).

## **Jesus’ Conclusion**

12:21 "**So is the man who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.**"

1. The only wealth that matters and lasts is wealth laid up in heaven. (Matt. 6:19-21).

MAT 6:19 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.

MAT 6:20 "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal;

MAT 6:21 for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

- a. Every time we do good we are laying up treasures in heaven. (Matt. 10:42).
- b. Those who had ministered to those who were sick, poor, in prison, lacked clothing, etc. had laid up treasures in heaven. (Matt. 25:31-46).
- c. Dorcas was a lady who had laid up treasures in heaven. (Acts 9:36-40).
- d. Jesus indicated His followers would be blessed.

MAR 10:29 Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake,

MAR 10:30 but that he shall receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life.

2. The fool hoards rather than being concerned for God and neighbors. (Lk. 12:33,34).

LUK 12:33 "Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves purses which do not wear out, an unfailling treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near, nor moth destroys.

LUK 12:34 "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

3. "Rich toward God" is synonymous for "treasure in heaven. (Lk. 12:33; 18:22).

## **Lessons**

1. Life is uncertain even for the rich. (Prov. 27:1).

2. We are taught to share what we have and not hoard what we have. (1 Tim. 6:17-19).

1TI 6:17 Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.

1TI 6:18 Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share,

1TI 6:19 storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.

3. Our riches cannot keep us from dying.

- a. We might be able to delay death with good habits, medicine, doctors, etc.

- b. The rich all die just as the poor and some die much sooner than they planned.

4. We cannot take our material riches with us. (1 Tim. 6:7).

- a. Riches are for this world only.

- b. One can avoid becoming a slave to possessions by recognizing their temporary quality.

- c. The rich fool did not recognize that he owned nothing.

- d. All he had, even his life, was on loan and could be called at any time.

5. We are to learn the lesson of contentment. (1 Tim. 6:6-10).

1TI 6:6 But godliness actually is a means of great gain, when accompanied by contentment.

1TI 6:7 For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either.

1TI 6:8 And if we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.

1TI 6:9 But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction.

1TI 6:10 For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang.

6. We should keep in mind the source of real happiness. (Lk. 12:15).

7. We should remember we are to lay up treasures in heaven. (Matt. 6:19-21).

- a. This makes us “rich toward God.” (Lk. 12:21).
- b. Being rich materially counts nothing with God for salvation.
  - 1) All the money in the world cannot buy eternal life.
  - 2) All the money in the world cannot atone for even one sin.
- c. Works cannot earn us salvation. (Eph. 2:9).
- d. Salvation is by grace through faith. (Eph. 2:5, 8, 9).

8. We must not exchange riches for our soul. (Matt. 16:26).

- a. This life on earth has an end, and we must leave behind all of our material possessions.
- b. The “soul” is immortal and has an everlasting destination.

9. It is very easy. in our pursuit of riches, to forget God.

- a. The rich fool never even mentioned God.
- b. The more wealth we gain the less we may feel a need for God.

10. It will be hard for a rich person to enter God's kingdom. (Lk. 18:25).

LUK 18:25 "For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." See Matt. 19:26.

- a. This does not mean it is impossible, but it is extremely difficult.
  - 1) The rich tend to trust in their wealth.
  - 2) Most often they share little or nothing with others.
  - 3) Some become rich by taking advantage of the poor. (Jas. 5:4).
- b. There were some faithful rich Christians then and now. (1 Tim. 6:17-19).
- c. We must pay special attention to passages like these. (Gal. 6:10; Jas. 2:14-17; Eph. 4:28; 1 Jn. 3:17, 18).

11. Jesus emphasizes we are not to be anxious about material things, but we are to “seek first his kingdom.” (Lk. 12:22-24; Matt. 6:25-33).

"Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®,  
© Copyright 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation  
Used by permission." ([www.Lockman.org](http://www.Lockman.org))