

In What Does Your Life Consist? (Luke 12:13-21)

1. The Interruption (v.13-14)

- The Lord "set His face to go to Jerusalem" (9:51). This event occurs while Jesus is teaching and proclaiming the Kingdom of God on His final journey from Galilee to Jerusalem and the cross.
- Just prior to this interruption, the Lord is teaching critical spiritual truths that include solemn warnings, encouragements for coming persecution, and that He is the pivotal factor on which one's eternal state depends.
- The man's outburst demonstrates that he is motivated by crass materialism and has no regard for his own spiritual welfare or that of the rest of the crowd. "Like too many people today, he wanted Jesus to serve him but not to save him." (Wiersbe).

2. The Imperative (v.15)

- The Lord refuses to leave off teaching spiritual truths to indulge the man's selfishness; rather, He uses the interruption as a springboard to challenge His hearers to evaluate where their affections, desires, and priorities lie.
- Covetousness or greed is defined as: "Intense, selfish desire to have more, irrespective of the need."
- The Lord gives two imperatives: "Take care" and "Be on your guard" indicating that covetousness is an insidious, sneaking, deceptive sin which is a constant threat. Active vigilance is required. The Lord applies this warning to "all covetousness" because it is not limited to money or material things and it afflicts the poor and wealthy alike because it is an issue of the heart. It is listed among the sins that come out of the heart of a person and defiles them (Mk. 7:21-23). It is part of the old nature against which we must constantly battle and put to death.
- Covetousness ruins our vertical relationship with God. It is idolatry (Col. 3:5, Eph. 5:5) and a heinous crime against God because it assigns greater worth to the creation than the Creator God by virtue of having greater affection, desire, and satisfaction in the creation than the Creator. Covetousness severs the relationship between provision and Provider and short circuits the Dependee/dependant mechanism which trains us in gratitude, trust, satisfaction, and delight in our Heavenly Father.
- Covetousness ruins our horizontal relationship with each other. The man in the crowd needs arbitration in the dispute between himself and his brother. Left unchecked, covetousness festers into jealousy, envy, and resentment.
- Covetousness is a 'mother sin' that gives birth to other sins and suffering (Jas. 4:1-3).

3. The Illustration (v.16-21)

- The reason our Lord gives for why we must "take care and be on guard against all covetousness" is because "one's life does not consist in the

abundance of his possessions." This is the key principle that the parable illustrates by presenting a man who lived as if life *did* consist in the abundance of his possessions. He did not take care and was not on guard against covetousness, but was dominated by greed. The parable is a caricature to illustrate the absurdity and fatal consequence of the proposition by taking it to its logical conclusion.

- Four aspects of a covetous life: Security, Significance, and Satisfaction are based on possessions, and Selfishness.
- His previous wealth exceeded his needs, and this new abundance exceeds his capacity to store it. He foolishly believes that abundant possessions make for an abundant life and that one can find ultimate satisfaction in ease, food, drink, and celebration. He is putting himself on the same level as an unreasoning animal (cf. Ecc. 2:1-11). With perceived security comes perceived independence from God. His ultimate goal is to check out of life and spend the rest of his days in self-indulgence.
- The confrontation: As the covetous man in the crowd interrupted the Lord Jesus, so in the parable God interrupts the covetous rich man. Note that the man never got the opportunity to carry out his plan. The Lord judges based on his motives and intentions.
- God calls the man a fool. In scripture, foolishness refers more to a moral deficiency than a mental or intellectual deficiency. It is not that the fool lacks intelligence or cannot reason, it is that the fool misuses his intelligence and reasons wrongly because he rejects the wisdom of God in scripture.
- The rich man was a fool because he built his life on things that don't last and don't ultimately matter. He traded the eternal for the temporary. He ignored reality and chose to live in a fantasy, taking care to provide for his security and comfort in this life as if it would go on forever, and neglected his certain death and judgment.
- The word "required" in verse 20 carries the idea of paying back a loan. The man who so cherished his possessions did not even own his life. God has the last word. No appeal, no rebuttal, no argument, no second chance.
- Jesus finishes by applying the parable to his hearers; those who are not rich toward God will share the same fate as the rich fool. Being rich toward God means counting Him as a greater treasure than any created thing, and using earthly wealth in a manner that expresses His infinitely superior worth (cf. Mt. 6:21, 13:44-46).
- The Lord taught that life does not consist in earthly treasures, but in what then does life consist? A vital relationship with the living God through and in union with Jesus Christ. "For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ Who is your life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory" (Col. 3:3-4, cf. Jn. 17:3).
- Set your affections on the Lord Jesus Christ. Meditate on His Person, work, and offices. Consider what He has done, is doing, and will do.

In what does your life consist?