

## SUCCESSFUL FOOLS

November 24, 2013

Luke 12:1-34

**“The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment.”**

Luke 12:23

This is the fifth message in a series of seven focusing upon stages of life described in Shakespeare’s “The Seven Ages of Man.” His fifth stage describes middle adulthood, citing qualities about which Scripture issues sober warning. Having described the infant, the young child, the adolescent and the young adult, he continues:

Shakespeare:

And then the justice,  
In fair round belly with good capon lined,  
With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,  
Full of wise saws and modern instances;  
And so he plays his part.

Quality:

Accomplished trade/profession & reputation  
Success, prosperity, security  
Savvy, perceptive, shrewd & worldly “with-it-ness”  
Experienced, worldly-wise, authoritative in trade/profession

This is the respected, accomplished person, having maturity, experience, expertise. Such a person is in great spiritual peril. The more he perceives these traits of human strength, and the stronger they become, the greater his danger. Christ warned about this repeatedly, and Luke 12 includes one of those warnings.

Christ was delivering very sober instruction when a man interrupted Him, seeking to enlist the Savior on his side in a quarrel regarding his inheritance (vv. 13-15). Jesus rebuked him, then told the parable of the rich man who was, in fact, very foolish (vv. 16-21).

The rich man enjoyed a plentiful harvest. Such harvest exhibited good qualities in him. He had exercised discipline, diligence, proper technique and agricultural skill. He had invested money in the effort, for the process has expenses. He did these things well, and now had a great harvest.

Surely he was aware of the role played by weather (what farmer isn’t?), yet the thought of God’s control seemed absent from his thinking. Christ described a self-reliant, self-secure man—traits often rebuked in Scripture as the downfall of wealthy men (Matt. 19:23, 24; Lk. 16:19-21; 18:18-25; I Tim. 6:6-10; Jas. 5:1-6). They are not isolated to the rich alone, but often infect any success.

When a great harvest came, there was no evidence that he thought of God, for his zeal was to hoard his increase as a means to ease and self-indulgence. God confronted him with the facts that although he had great possessions, these could not secure his life, which was the most essential ingredient to his entire plan.

God has the prerogative to require immediate appearance before His throne. No one can alter this fact. “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Heb. 9:27). Life is our most valuable possession. Riches, self-reliance and self-security cannot prolong it. God alone sustains it, and can withdraw it at any time and at His pleasure. Nothing is more urgent than this truth, and none are more foolish than those who live heedless of this fact. The only thing that matters is this: How will you fare when you appear before God?

## **The Seven Ages of Man**

**William Shakespeare**

All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players;  
They have their exits and their entrances,  
And one man in his time plays many parts,  
His acts being seven ages.

At first the infant,  
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms;

And then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel  
And shining morning face, creeping like snail  
Unwillingly to school.

And then the lover,  
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad  
Made to his mistress' eyebrow.

Then a soldier,  
Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard,  
Jealous in honor, sudden and quick in quarrel,  
Seeking the bubble reputation  
Even in the cannon's mouth.

And then the justice,  
In fair round belly with good capon lined,  
With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,  
Full of wise saws and modern instances;  
And so he plays his part.

The sixth age shifts  
Into the lean and slippered pantaloon,  
With spectacles on nose and pouch on side;  
His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide  
For his shrunk shank; and his big manly voice,  
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes  
And whistles in his sound.

Last scene of all,  
That ends this strange eventful history,  
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,  
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.