

## LUKE 12

## COVETOUSNESS AND WATCHFULNESS

When Jesus had bitterly rebuked the public religious teachers of His day, He turned to His disciples and spoke words of cheer – which have strengthened His followers throughout the ages (verses 1-12). He encouraged them by the assurance that the corrupting influence of the Pharisees would come to an end. Their hypocrisy would be mercilessly unmasked, and their power would cease; while on the other hand, the witness of the disciples would not always be confined to places of obscurity – for it would be heard in all the world. The Savior also encouraged His disciples by assuring them of the loving care of God. They would do well to look to Him in reverent trust; for this would give them confidence and strength, and it would also free them from the fear of man.

The parable of the rich fool (verses 13-21) was related by our Lord, in order to teach us that riches neither form the real purpose of life, nor do they assure us of its continuance. Therefore, it is the sheerest folly to seek for gold while forgetting God. A man had come to Jesus with the request, “Teacher, bid my brother divide the inheritance with me.” But the Master’s reply implied that He regarded His work as spiritual, and that He was not willing to invade the sphere of civil law nor to usurp the place of regularly appointed authorities. But He pierced to the very root of the request, and He saw that this man was neglecting the civil law and seeking the support of a religious teacher because he was moved by greed. It is this same “love of money” which lies at the root of most of the injustice, inequity, and cruelty which burden the world today. Therefore, Jesus turned to the multitude and uttered this warning: “Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.”

To enforce His message, Jesus told the story of the rich man who was heaping up goods for selfish enjoyment in future years; and who was suddenly confronted by death, which compels all men to leave to others all that they have amassed. This man’s foolishness consisted in forgetting that fortune and life itself are dependent upon the will of God; and that a man really owns nothing, for he owes everything to God. He also failed to realize that the real value of life consists in the unselfish use of wealth and opportunity, according to the will of God. It is the worst of follies to heap up goods while neglecting God.

While addressing the crowds, Jesus warned them against covetousness by preaching the parable of the foolish rich man who trusted in his goods and forgot God. Now He turned to His disciples, to urge them to forget their worries by

**Outline of the chapter:**

- ❖ *Christ reproves the hypocritical interpreters of the Law – verses 1-12*
- ❖ *A caution and parable against covetousness and worldly care – verses 13-34*
- ❖ *The Savior requires His servants to be always watchful – verses 35-53*
- ❖ *He warns them to be reconciled and at peace with God – verses 54-59*

trusting in God (verses 22-34). While a Christian must not be selfishly absorbed in amassing wealth, he also need not be anxious about even the necessities of life like food and clothing. If God robes the perishable flowers of the field in such beautiful colors, will He not also provide garments for His own sons and daughters? To be anxious about these necessities is to imitate the heathen, who are either ignorant of or else refuse to acknowledge God's Providential care. We show ourselves to be the Lord's children by our trust in Him.

So we know that we are not to be absorbed in seeking wealth, as the foolish rich man; nor are we to be anxious about food and clothing, as are the people of this world. However, there is something about which we *should* feel a deep concern, and that is the Kingdom of God! If we seek and labor for its coming, we can be sure that our Father will supply our temporal needs. Even though we may sometimes be in peril and in need, we can still be certain that we shall share at last in the blessedness of that Kingdom! Therefore, we should not be absorbed in gathering the goods that perish. Rather, by deeds of sacrifice and works of charity, and being inspired by gratitude to God and love to men; we are to lay up "treasure in the heavens," which will never be stolen or destroyed. And since the heart always follows its treasure, our thoughts will then be turned upward toward God. When we trust in His power and love, our anxiety will be banished, and we shall be free from consuming cares!

Our Lord enjoined upon His disciples the attitude of watchfulness – implying that if His coming was occupying their thoughts, they would be kept from both worldliness and worry at the same time, and they would also be diligent in serving Him. He illustrated this attitude of heart and mind by two parables: the parable of the returning master, and the parable of the thief. Our Master's return sometimes seems to be long-delayed. His absence is like a long night which must transpire before He reappears, but His followers must always be prepared for His return. This means that we must continually be found at our posts of duty, faithfully performing our tasks and absorbing ourselves in the work which the Master has given us to do.



In the closing verses of this chapter, Jesus rebuked the foolish ignorance of the multitudes. He declared that they could interpret the signs of weather so well that they could accurately predict rain or drought; but they could not see, in Christ's words and works, the proofs that He was indeed the Savior of the world. Nevertheless, He mercifully warned them to repent before it was too late. They would have wisdom enough to agree with an adversary while they were on the way to a courtroom, before sentence had been pronounced. But they would do well to see that it was even more wise to seek peace with God – before the day of mercy and grace has passed!

*Lord, we repent of times when we have been like the rich fool in the parable. Help us to not cloud our vision and disturb our peace by a foolish love for money! Amen.*