

Scripture Readings:

[various verses for context]

Luke 12:1 “In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another, [Jesus] began to say to His disciples first of all, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

12:4 "And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. **5** But I will show you whom you should fear:

Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him! ...

8 "Also I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God.

11 Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say. **12** For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say."

[And our text for this morning:]

13 Then one from the crowd said to [Jesus], "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." **14** But He said to him, "Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?"

15 And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses."

16 Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. **17** And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' **18** So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. **19** And I will say to my soul,

"Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry." "

20 But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?'

21 So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.'"

"Guarding Our Hearts Rather Than Our Possessions"

This morning we come to a straight-forward parable with a simple message: Don't lay up treasures for yourself, but be rich toward God! Now, it is interesting that it comes on a Sunday where Phil is adding some Vision Forum Conference tapes to our church library that challenge us to have long term plans and talk a lot about covenantal faithfulness and leaving a proper inheritance!

- **If the important lesson this morning is to learn how we are to guard our hearts rather than our treasures, why would we encourage you all to listen to a series about treasures and long term plans?**

Lord willing, if I do a proper job of explaining our lesson this morning, you will see how they should fit together nicely!

- **What we see here in this morning's text is the second interruption of Jesus during His teaching to what were growing crowds on His journey to Jerusalem.**

The first was the woman in chapter eleven who shouted out how blessed the mother of Jesus was:

- **Responding to this declaration, Jesus answered, "More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"**

This morning Jesus is once again interrupted and this time the man is rebuked for distracting Jesus. Jesus then uses the interruption to teach a vital lesson about what is truly important: As I have entitled the sermon, we must guard our hearts rather than our possessions. We have a passage that teaches some VERY practical lessons and it comes on the Sunday where we begin the practical portion of the church calendar: Ordinary or normal time.

The Christian life is about doctrine and life! Properly understood this is hearing and doing the words of Jesus: As Jesus said, "If you love me keep my commandments!

-- We should 'hear & do' on a daily basis as we pray without ceasing!

-- We should 'hear & do' weekly as we forsake not the fellowship of the Saints in Covenant Renewal worship

-- And the church calendar helps us to 'hear & do' year after year!

Our constant prayer is that we would be a people of the Word: We should begin each day in God's Word, on our knees confessing our sin and seeking the Lord's wisdom and guidance for the day ahead:

- **BUT we don't stay on our knees or read our Bible all day long: We get up and go forth to serve the Lord in our daily lives.**

We gather each week for Covenant Renewal worship where again we confess our sins, receive instruction from God's Word, present our prayers & gifts, and join with the Lord at this glorious Table.

- **But we don't stay here, but rather we are commissioned to go forth and serve the risen and reigning Savior!**

And when we follow the church calendar, we are reminded each year of the importance of doctrine and life: We remember the importance of the work of Christ from Advent through Trinity Sunday

- **But then we have ordinary or normal time running from Trinity Sunday until the next Advent where we begin all over again.**

Our God is a God of order and we are to order our lives as we seek to serve Him as those made in His image. Just as the physical world tends toward chaos when it is not properly tended, so our lives will be chaos if we ignore these important ways that God instructs us to order them.

We are commanded to hear and DO the Words of Jesus: We should not play church on Sunday and then live as the world does the other six days of the week. We should not celebrate special days of the year like Christmas and Easter and just follow the secular calendar for the remainder of the year!

- **IF we do, we can end up like the man who is rebuked here in Luke chapter 12 this morning!**

To understand this man's problem we need to remember the context which is why I read a few of the past verses. Jesus is teaching His disciples and a growing crowd about how important it is to fear the one true God and how he cares for each person... Right in the middle this, the man interrupts Jesus asking him to settle a family dispute over money.

- **He obviously was not paying attention!**

I guess those of us who preach should take some comfort in seeing that even when Jesus gave a sermon, some don't pay attention and others learn all the wrong lessons!

- **It should remind us to pay attention & to be careful we do not to learn the wrong lessons from this parable!**
- **Jesus is not teaching that money and possessions are bad...**

All we have to do is think about the place of riches in the Scriptures and men of God who were richly blessed: Abraham and his sons, Joseph in Egypt, Kings David and Solomon and of course Job who was blessed with twice his riches in the end.

- **Jesus turns to His disciples and tells this parable to show the problem with the man He just rebuked for interrupting Him.**

Jesus turns to His disciples and says to them in verse 15: "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses."

- God loves to bless His people, but when the sin of covetousness causes our attention to turn from the one who blesses us to the blessing we have received, that is a BIG problem!

To illustrate this, Jesus tells them a parable of a rich man who had been blessed: Notice in verse 16 that we are told, "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully." What we see here is the truth that Jesus taught His disciples at the Sermon on the Mount: "God makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust."

- This rich man did not take note of God's blessings when he was literally surrounded by them...

He was a man focused **ONLY** on himself, as we see in his response: He thinks to himself: 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' 18 So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul,

- Did you notice the focus?
- He says "I" or "my" **NINE** times in just two verses!

And as will **ALWAYS** be the case when our focus is on us rather than God, he draws the wrong conclusion: "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry."

What comes to my mind are the Russian & Romanian Christians we heard about as young Christians: These persecuted Christians prayed faithfully for American Christians because they could not understand how we could remain faithful in the midst of so much material wealth...

- We are in the midst of **SO** much affluence that we are like the fish who don't think about being wet!
- We can see the splinter in this man's eye, but do we have logs in our own when it comes to how we see our money & possessions?
- **IF** we forget who it is that provides these blessings we will hear the same warning that was given to the rich man:

20 But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?'

I cannot help but think that here Jesus may have turned and looked right at the man who interrupted our Lord's teaching...

- **Perhaps his own father had just suddenly passed which created the dispute over an inheritance that he now wanted Jesus to solve!**

Then Jesus concludes with our lesson for today:

21 "So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God"

- **It is not what we have or what we have done that is important: It is who we are... Those whose names are written in heaven:**
- **As Jesus told His returning disciples who marveled that the demons themselves obeyed their commands, "do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven!"**

And how do we know that our names are written in heaven:

- **As Jesus told the woman who honored His mother:
"blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"**

Guarding our hearts rather than our treasure means that we remember who we are, Christians who have been baptized into the name of the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit

- **Remembering this means that we hear the voice of Jesus and we respond with obedience keeping our focus on Him and not ourselves or even on material blessings which He chooses to bless us with in our lives!**

We must strive to be those who hear the words of Jesus and not those who interrupt Him so we can tell Him what we think He should be doing! As we make plans or think about things in our lives, we must always check our speaking and thinking to see if it is "all about us," rather than speaking and thinking like the Apostle Paul does in Ephesians one & two where the focus is clearly on God's actions! [homework!]

- **Then we will keep the proper perspective about people and things that God brings into our lives, ready to do the good works we were created in Christ Jesus to walk in!**

The example Jesus uses here is a rich harvest, but we must remember that it can be many other things: Other blessings God has given us which are good in and of themselves, that can cause us to take our eyes off Jesus:

- **It can be our spouses**
- **It can be our children**
- **It can be our extended family**
- **It can be our country**
- **It can be our friends**
- **It can be our Church**
- **It can be sports or entertainment**
- **It can be our job**

God's promise is true in all of these areas: "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you!"

- **BUT we must not place our focus on these people or material things once God has blessed us with them!**

We should see how easy it is to put ourselves at the center of any of these things: We need to reflect on what we think and say about these blessings: Are we saying with this rich man, What shall I do, since I have no room for my... [fill in the blank]

Do we simply think about what WE will do: I will build a bigger house, or buy a bigger wedding ring, or have more children, or... And then will I look at what I can do and say to my soul, Soul, you have much... [fill in the blank]

Will I think that I have enough BLESSINGS laid up for many years, so I can take my ease, just eating, & drinking & being merry?

- **Suddenly, the God who gave us these many blessings is nowhere to be found!**
- **The problem lies not with the people or things in our lives, but rather the foolish way we relate to them, forgetting that they are blessed gifts from God!**

We starting this morning discussing the Vision Forum conference on having a 200 year plan, which is a GREAT idea IF we keep God at the center of all that we do and have!

- **I want to conclude by looking at Psalm 112, which was at the center of many of their discussions: [mention the tape series]**

Psalm 112:1 "Praise the Lord! Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, Who delights greatly in His commandments.

- **We are to fear the one true God, hearing and obeying His commands!**
- **This stands in stark contrast with the man who interrupted Jesus with HIS priorities!**

2 His descendants will be mighty on earth; The generation of the upright will be blessed.

- **Notice he is mighty on the earth and is blessed as a righteous man!**
- **Verse 3 repeats this just so we don't miss the point!**

3 Wealth and riches will be in his house, And his righteousness endures forever.

- **The Psalmist then shows the right use of these riches:**

4 Unto the upright there arises light in the darkness; He is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous.

- **This should be our theme for all of the normal time in the Church calendar this year...**

➤ **Bringing light to a dark world by being gracious, full of compassion and righteous in all our ways!**

➤ **Verse 5 again repeats the point so we don't miss what is being said**

5 A good man deals graciously and lends; He will guide his affairs with discretion.

➤ **Unlike the rich man in today's parable, he compassionately uses the wealth God has provided**

➤ **This righteous man need not fear that God might one day declare to him: "Thou FOOL!"**

6 Surely he will never be shaken; The righteous will be in everlasting remembrance.

➤ **He has built his life on the firm foundation and verse 7 repeats his promised comfort:**

7 He will not be afraid of evil tidings; His heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord.

Our rich man this morning strove to protect his riches and lost it all... May we protect our hearts so that they might be steadfast, trusting in Jesus who promised that our needs would be met saying,

➤ **"For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God & His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."**

Communion Meditation:

God makes a covenant:

Genesis 9: " **7** And as for you, be fruitful and multiply; Bring forth abundantly in the earth And multiply in it." **8** Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying: **9** "And as for Me, behold, I establish My covenant with you and with your descendants after you, **10** and with every living creature that is with you: the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you, of all that go out of the ark, every beast of the earth. **11** Thus I establish My covenant with you: Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood; never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth."

God Gives a sign for that Covenant:

12 And God said: "This is the sign of the covenant which I make between Me and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: **13** I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth. **14** It shall be, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the rainbow shall be seen in the cloud; **15** and I will remember My covenant which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. **16** The rainbow shall be in the cloud, and I will look on it to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." **17** And God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that is on the earth.""