

Message #61

Luke 12:13-21

In 1923 a group of the world's most successful financiers met at the Edgewater Beach Hotel in Chicago. At that meeting was: 1) The President of the largest utility company; 2) The greatest wheat speculator; 3) The president of the New York Stock Exchange; 4) A member of the President's Cabinet; 5) The greatest "bear" from Wall Street; 6) The president of the Bank of International Settlements; 7) The head of the world's greatest monopoly. One person wrote, "these tycoons controlled more wealth than there was in the U.S. treasury." In fact, for years newspapers printed their success stories and they urged people to follow their examples.

Twenty five years after that meeting in Chicago, this was what happened to them:

- 1) The president of the largest steel company, Charles M. Schwab, lived on borrowed money the last five years of his life and he died broke.
- 2) The greatest wheat speculator, Arthur Cutten, died of a heart attack overseas, insolvent.
- 3) The president of the NYSE, Richard Whitney, served a term in Sing Sing prison and ended up managing a small dairy farm.
- 4) The member of the president's cabinet, Albert Fall, was pardoned from prison so he could die at home in El Paso, Texas.
- 5) The greatest "bear" in Wall Street, Jesse Livermore, committed suicide.
- 6) The president of the Bank of International Settlements, Leon Fraser, committed suicide.
- 7) The head of the world's greatest monopoly, Ivar Drueger, committed suicide.

One person said, "All of these men had learned how to make money, but not one of them learned how to live life."

When Jesus Christ was here on earth, He was not some fundraiser or money maker. But He did address money issues. **As one commentator said, "Jesus dealt with money matters because money matters." How we think about money; how we use our money and what we do with our money shows whether or not we love the Lord and are obedient to God's word.**

There is no question that one must have some money to live. There is no question that it is the mark of spirituality to provide for your family (I Tim. 5:8). There is no question that it is very wise to generously give money to God's work (Prov. 3:9-10; II Cor. 9:6-7). There is no question that it is very wise to save some money (Prov. 6:6-8; 10:4-5). There is no question that it is wise and spiritual to give some money to those who have need (Prov. 11:25; I Tim. 6:17-19). There is nothing wrong with money and there is nothing wrong with having money, but there is something wrong with loving money. Just as Solomon said, "He who trusts in his riches will fall" (Prov. 11:28).

Jesus Christ never wanted His people wasting their lives living for money. He did not want His people consumed with financial and material wealth. So what He teaches His disciples here is this:

ONE WHO INVESTS HIS LIFE ACCUMULATING MONEY AND MATERIAL POSSESSIONS IS ONE WHO IS MAKING A VERY FATAL, FOOLISH AND ETERNAL MISTAKE.

Now this text is primarily addressed to “His disciples” (12:1). Jesus is teaching His disciples about many subjects and one of those subjects is the subject of money and one’s perspective of it.

Now there are those prosperity gospel heretic preachers who will tell you that God wants you to be rich. He wants you to have a lot of money. He wants to bless you with wealth. These greedy idolaters are presenting data contrary to what Jesus taught. Jesus taught that one who devotes himself to accumulating wealth is foolish and makes many foolish mistakes.

In this passage there are three mistakes that Jesus Christ points out:

MISTAKE #1 – One who is consumed with money misunderstands Christ’s purpose. 12:13-14

As Jesus was teaching, someone in the crowd stepped forward and wanted Christ to settle a family inheritance dispute between this man and his brother. Jewish law taught that the eldest son was to receive a double portion and apparently this man had not yet received his settlement. So he decided to ask Christ to resolve this and get him his inheritance.

Now Jesus had not been teaching anything about money. He had been teaching about eternal judgment and pharisaical hypocrisy (12:1-5). He had been teaching about public commitment and confession of Him (12:8-9) and also against blaspheming the Holy Spirit (12:10-12). These are serious, eternal theological topics.

So some man had obviously been listening to this and instead of him worrying about eternal judgment and confessing Christ or blaspheming the Holy Spirit, he was concerned about money. So all the while Jesus is teaching people about hypocrisy and eternal life, this guy is simmering on the subject of money. He was more concerned about that than his own soul.

In **verse 14**, Jesus Christ made it very clear that He was not here on earth to settle financial matters. He said I did not come here for the purpose of being on earth to be a judge or arbitrator in your legal money matters.

- 1) Jesus came to reveal God to man.
- 2) Jesus came to be a sacrifice for sin.
- 3) Jesus came to save and redeem lost sinners (Luke 19:10).
- 4) Jesus came to destroy the work of the Devil.
- 5) Jesus came to be the Messiah of Israel.
- 6) Jesus came to be the perfect High Priest.

Christ says I did not come here to settle your temporal money matters; I came here to settle eternal matters. Now Jesus is not saying there is no need for attorneys and judges; what He is saying is My focus is spiritual and eternal, not temporal and material.

We do not have the focus of Jesus Christ and we are not after the purpose of Jesus Christ if our life is consumed with financial wealth and material prosperity.

MISTAKE #2 – One who is consumed with money misunderstands life's purpose. **12:15**

The Pharisees taught, as Dr. J. Dwight Pentecost said, “whom the Lord loves, he makes rich.” Jesus warned His own disciples to guard themselves from every form of “greed.” That word is one that implies an aggressive desire that goes after and wants more and more and more (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 64). Dr. William Hendricksen says it is the uncontrollable yearning to have...have...have more and more and still more.

Now Jesus gives two commands in this verse about this focus: 1) Beware; 2) Be on guard. Jesus is commanding that His people watch themselves carefully and guard themselves from falling into this trap.

Notice what Christ says, not even when one has an abundance does “his life consist of his possessions.” There is an article “the” before the noun “life.” So this refers to “the life” that really matters, eternal life.

What Jesus is teaching is even when one has a great amount of money and a great amount of things that has nothing to do with matters of eternal life. Frankly, money is a lousy way to keep score of your relationship with God. Because you could have a lot of money and be flat broke.

MISTAKE #3 – One who is consumed with money misunderstands eternal prosperity. **12:16-21**

Jesus decided to tell a parable to teach His people about the folly of focusing on temporal and material wealth. A parable is an earthly story designed to communicate a heavenly and eternal truth. **What Jesus wanted to drive home was that it was possible to have great sums of money and wealth and end up with nothing in eternity.**

The parable is about a “rich man” (v. 16). This is the same exact Greek construction Jesus will use in Luke 16:19. **It is no coincidence that the men are not named because, as Dr. Richard Lenski said, their lives aren't worth remembering in eternity.** Now the term “rich man” sounds so impressive to most in this world, but it means zero in the next world.

Now there are five facts that Jesus brings out about this rich man:

Fact #1 - The rich man was successful. **12:16**

The adjective “rich” means this man was extremely rich and the words “very productive” means this man was so prosperous that he lived life in a constant state of euphoria (ευφορεω). This man had the good life.

Fact #2 - The rich man was progressive. **12:17**

This man wanted to expand. He was an entrepreneur who was enterprising. He was looking to grow and make his business as big as possible. He was looking to make his mark in this world. There is not one thought that he wanted to use any of his wealth to support God’s work. It was all about him and his expansion. He is strategizing how he can have more.

Fact #3 - The rich man was selfish. **12:18**

What catches your eye here are the pronouns “I” and “my.” This man’s thinking is this is all about me. I will produce more, get more, build more and hoard more. William Kelly said in his commentary this was “systematic selfishness.” This was well thought out selfishness.

His plan is to build new large buildings so he can hoard more for himself. He is having a difficult time trying to figure out what to do with all of his prosperity.

There is no question that God is able to give a person a great amount of prosperity, possessions and money. If this should happen, one text to always remember is I Timothy 6:17-19. Do not fix your hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God who supplies us with everything we have and we need to be generous in giving so we lay up a treasure for the future when it comes to eternity.

Fact #4 - The rich man was self-centered. **12:19**

This man was so self-centered that he actually had conversations with himself and his own soul. He actually talked to himself as to how great he was and how much he had. **He became a legend in his own soul and mind and we don’t even know the guy’s name.**

The man was set for life. He had no financial worries. He had complete financial freedom, stability and security. All he had to think about now was himself. He could build anything he wanted and sit back and enjoy the good life. He could eat, drink and be merry.

Fact #5 - The rich man was stupid. **12:20**

Jesus said God’s classification of this man is that he is a “fool.” The word means from God’s perspective this man had no mental sense and was spiritually insane. **The man the world applauds as being a financial genius, Jesus said is insane.**

He had spent his entire life getting, achieving and hoarding and he forgot about dying. It was his time to die. The very night he was gloating about all he had was the very night he was going to die.

From the world's perspective, the night the man died he looked like a winner, but God says he was a loser, he is a fool.

W. H. Griffith Thomas said this man made three major miscalculations:

(Miscalculation #1) - He mistook his body for his soul - physical life more important than spiritual.

(Miscalculation #2) - He mistook himself for God - he devoted himself to himself, not God.

(Miscalculation #3) - He mistook time for eternity - he thought he had years to live; he had minutes.

This man was a total fool and frankly so are many who go to church. They are wasting their lives trying to lay up treasures on earth rather than treasures in heaven.

In **verse 21**, Jesus makes it clear that any person who gets caught up with greed is a fool. One who focuses on having wealth in this world without being rich toward God is a fool.

Contextually there are three reasons why one is a fool who does not focus on being rich toward God:

(Reason #1) - We are going to die and face God and we don't know when.

(Reason #2) - We will leave every material and monetary thing behind.

(Reason #3) - We will enter eternity as a loser.

I read a story of a godly old man who went to see a young, ambitious, upcoming, successful business man. The old man asked him to share his philosophy of life with him.

1) My goal is to learn my trade and do it better than anyone else.

The old man said, "and then"

2) Then I will continue to set up and develop my business.

The old man said, "and then"

3) Then I will continue to expand my business and make a fortune.

The old man said, "and then"

4) Then I will grow older and retire and enjoy my fortune.

The old man said, "and then"

5) Then I suppose eventually I will die.

The old man said, "and then."

If we ever forget the fact that we are going to die and face God, we are a fool. Are we laying up treasures on earth or in heaven?

There is a great prayer that David prays in Psalm 39:4-6. That is a prayer of one who is not a fool.

“LORD, make me to know my end and what is the extent of my days.
Behold, Thou hast made my days as handbreadths and my lifetime as nothing in thy sight.
Surely every man at his best is a mere breath
Surely every man walks about as a phantom; Surely they make an uproar for nothing.
He amasses riches and does not know who will gather them.”