

“Don’t Be a Fool”

August 23, 2020

Luke 12:13-21

I. Introduction

In the opening of his first letter to his protégé Timothy, Paul wrote in **1 Timothy 1:15**, “**Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.**” The trouble was and is, many don’t think they are sinners. For those who feel they were “okay,” the Bible is full of verses indicating otherwise. Solomon wrote in **Proverbs 20:9**, “**Who can say, ‘I have kept my heart pure; I am clean and without sin’?”** **Isaiah 64:6** says, “**All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.**” **Romans 3:23** says, “**For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.**” In **1 John 1:8** we read, “**If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.**”

In Jesus’ day as well as in ours, it’s the self-righteous, people like the Pharisees and the rich, young ruler, who knew that they were “okay.” To open their eyes, Jesus had to be rather blunt, e.g., to the rich, young ruler in **Matthew 19:21**, “**Jesus said, ‘If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.’”** In the end of Luke 11 and the opening verses of chapter 12, Jesus had warned the “**crowd of many thousands,**” which included Pharisees, against the deadly danger of hypocritical false religion. He said, “**Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.**” In today’s Scripture, Jesus issued another warning, “**Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed**” or as other translations have it: “**covetousness.**” Hypocrisy relates to the spiritual realm; greed to the material world. Often these two sins are related or connected. The Pharisees, for example, were models of both sins. They were the prime examples of hypocrisy, but **Luke 16:14** adds that they also “**loved money.**” Both their teachings and their motives were corrupt.

II. An Example of Greed

Jesus' teaching on the danger of hypocritical false religion, His teaching about the Trinity, and His warning against blaspheming the Holy Spirit was suddenly and surprisingly interrupted. In the midst of Jesus' teaching, **"Someone in the crowd said to him, 'Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.'"** This man wasn't interested in the deep spiritual truths Jesus was teaching, he was only interested in his own problems. He got tired of waiting for Jesus to finish, so he interrupted Him.

Such a request, although made at an inappropriate time, wasn't unusual. By calling Jesus **"teacher"** the man recognized Him as a rabbi, and rabbis were expected to help settle legal matters. His request that Jesus **"Tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me"** suggests that his brother was also there. Ignoring any of the details, the man wanted Jesus to rule in his favor.

However, Jesus refused to get involved. He knew that no answer He gave would solve the real problem, which was greed or covetousness in the hearts of the two brothers. As long as both men were greedy, no settlement would be satisfactory. Their greatest need was to have their hearts changed. Like too many people today, they wanted Jesus to serve them but not to save them. Jesus used this opportunity offered by the man's request to warn of the danger of greed. He began by issuing a warning.

III. Beware of Greed

A. The Warning **"Then he said to them, 'Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.'"** Jesus was warning all those who were listening—not just His disciples. Refusing to sit in judgment on a dispute about money, Jesus instead issued a far more important judgment on the sin of greed.

"Watch out" or **"Beware"** is a reminder that constant vigilance against greed is important. Like the yeast of hypocrisy, greed can sneak into one's life if he or she isn't continually watching. Greed is an insatiable thirst for getting more and more of something we think we need in order to be truly satisfied. It

may be a thirst for money or the things that money can buy, or even a thirst for position and power.

Solomon wisely observed in [Ecclesiastes 5:10](#), “Whoever loves money never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income.”

[Ephesians 5:5](#) says, “For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person-- such a person is an idolater-- has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.” To focus one’s life on the collection of material possessions, whatever they may be, is to worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator Himself. Jesus said, “A man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.” *Abundance* means to have more than enough; having an abundance of things doesn’t mean having a meaningful, purposeful, eternal life. A fulfilling, satisfying life that enjoys eternal peace, joy, hope, and blessing from salvation cannot be bought in the material world, no matter how much one possesses.

B. The Parable To demonstrate to His listeners the folly or dangers of seeking fulfillment in riches, Jesus told them a parable. Like the man who had interrupted Jesus’ teaching, the imaginary man in the parable was caught up with the pursuit of riches. There was no implication of any wrongdoing, dishonesty, or crime in his success—he had done no wrong; he just had a bumper crop—Jesus said, “The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop.”

The main issue in this parable is not wealth. Rather, it is one’s attitude to obtaining and maintaining wealth. The man in the parable happened to have a fruitful harvest, and he must decide what to do with the overflow. “He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’” The huge harvest presented a problem since he didn’t have enough room to store all of it. So, after some thought, he decided to “tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my grain and my goods.” By rebuilding larger barns on the site of the existing ones, he would increase his storage capacity without having to build on his productive crop land.

There are perils to prosperity—turn to [Proverbs 30:7-9](#). In the Parable of the Sower in

Matthew 13:22 Jesus said, “The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful.” Turn to

1 Timothy 6:6-10. Wealth, actually the love of money, can take our eyes off of God; it can choke the Word of God; it can lead to temptation and give a false sense of security. People who are satisfied only with the things money can buy are in great danger of losing the things that money cannot buy.

This farmer saw his wealth as an opportunity to please himself. Instead of considering giving some of his wealth to God or others, this man’s only thought was how he could best use his resources for his own benefit. Caught up with himself he said, “And I’ll say to myself, ‘You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.’” Five times in verses 17-19 he speaks of what “I” will do, as if he owns it all. Moreover, he speaks about “my” crops, “my” barns, “my” grain, “my” goods, and “myself.” He will not share his abundance but keep it for his own private use. His goal is to ease back and withdraw from life. He will “eat, drink, and be merry.” He felt no concern or responsibility for anyone else. He was following the world’s motto: “Take care of Number One!” The essence of greed is keeping what resources God brings your way for yourself.

As in so many of Jesus’ stories, there is an unexpected twist in this parable. Just when this man imagined himself to be set for life, God took his life. After he finished making his self-centered plans, “God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’” A *fool* is someone who is mindless, lacking sense, ignorant of knowledge and truth—Psalm 14:1 says, “The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’” This man had foolishly forgotten God as well as his own mortality. To leave God out of one’s plans is the height of foolishness—turn to James 4:13-16. Solomon wrote of the concern of the greedy person—turn to Ecclesiastes 2:18-19.

Wealth cannot keep one alive when the time comes to die, nor can it buy back the opportunities that were missed while he was thinking of himself and ignoring God and others. There is no bigger fool

than he who does not prepare for the life to come; for eternal life. The tragedy is not what the man left behind, but what lay before him—an eternity without God. The man lived without God and died without God; his wealth was but an incident in his life. God is not impressed with money or any other “toys” one collects while on earth.

C. The Application Jesus then gave the application, “**This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God.**” Being “**rich toward God**” means to acknowledge gratefully that everything we have comes from God; it means to make an effort to use what He gives us for the good of others and the glory of God. Wealth can be enjoyed and employed at the same time if our purpose is to honor God. To be rich toward God means spiritual enrichment, not just personal enjoyment. **Turn to Matthew 6:19-21.** The location of a person’s treasure reveals the true condition of his or her heart. It reveals whether they have love for themselves and their possessions, or love for God; whether they worship material things, or worship God; whether they seek fulfillment in this life, or in the life to come; whether they store up treasure on earth only to lose it forever, or store up treasure in heaven and keep it forever. The antidote to foolish, sinful, materialistic greed is to use what God has given us for his glory and the benefit of others.

IV. Conclusion

But don’t get the wrong impression, the Bible doesn’t forbid the possession of money-- **Deuteronomy 8:18** says, “**But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth.**” **1 Timothy 6:17** says, “**Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.**” God produces wealth; He richly provides for us. There were many godly men and women in the Bible who were blessed with wealth by God: Job (**Job 1:3**), Abraham (**Genesis 13:2**), Isaac (**Genesis 26:13**), Jacob (**Gen. 30:43**), Boaz (**Ruth 2:1**), Solomon (**1 Kings 10:23**), Joseph of Arimathea (**Matt. 27:57**) and Lydia (**Acts 16:11-15**).

Although the Bible doesn't forbid possessing money, it does forbid loving it. As we read earlier in **1 Timothy 6:10**, **"The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil."** How people view money is an effective barometer of their spirituality. Money is neither good nor bad in itself; corrupt people can put it to evil uses, while good people can put it to righteous uses. Though it is morally neutral, what people do with their money reflects their life priorities. In the words of Jesus in **Luke 12:34**, **"Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."** In **1 Timothy 6:17** Paul wrote Timothy, **"Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God."** To love and keep for oneself money or, for that matter, any other "thing" is idolatry.

Our wealth, whether in money, goods, or abilities, opens up choices for us that allow us to pursue our own interests in a variety of ways. Such pursuits can easily keep us from using resources and abilities in a way most honoring to God. Note that Jesus isn't condemning wealth as such, but its use. How do you use what God has given you? Do you seek to pile up treasure for yourself? Are you known for your generosity? Or does compassion and caring take a back seat to your personal desires?

We need to remain vigilant. If we aren't careful, we will get caught up in the view our culture feeds us and we will tend to hoard our possessions because we are persuaded that this life is all there is. That's the idea behind the old proverb, *"Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow you may die."* Or the contemporary equivalent, summarized in a popular commercial, *"You only go around once in life, so grab for all the gusto you can get."* There is no accountability, no sense of a future with God, or no sense of honoring values that He has set forth in this now-or-never approach. Christians know better.

2 Corinthians 5:10 says, **"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad."** In **Hebrews 9:27** we are reminded, **"Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment."** Jesus' parable calls for us to reflect about how we make the choices we do, what is your priority? **Turn to**

1 Corinthians 3:10-15. Are you building with gold, silver, and costly stones or wood, hay, and straw?

Don't be a fool—choose wisely.