

Luke 12:13-21 – "The Danger of Greed"

Text: Luke 12:13-21 (CSB)

13 Someone from the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." **14** "Friend," he said to him, "who appointed me a judge or arbitrator over you?" **15** He then told them, "Watch out and be on guard against all greed, because one's life is not in the abundance of his possessions." **16** Then he told them a parable: "A rich man's land was very productive. **17** He thought to himself, 'What should I do, since I don't have anywhere to store my crops?' **18** I will do this,' he said. 'I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones and store all my grain and my goods there. **19** Then I'll say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods stored up for many years. Take it easy; eat, drink, and enjoy yourself.'" **20** But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life is demanded of you. And the things you have prepared—whose will they be?' **21** This is how it is for the one who stores up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."

Key Background:

- **Inheritance Disputes:** Jewish law typically gave the firstborn son a double portion, with younger sons receiving equal shares of the remainder. Disputes were common and often brought before rabbis for resolution.
- **Jesus's Refusal:** Jesus refused to act as a legal arbitrator, recognizing that the real issue wasn't legal but spiritual - the man's heart was controlled by greed.
- **Agricultural Prosperity:** The parable reflects the agricultural economy of first-century Palestine, where a good harvest was cause for celebration and security.
- **Storage Methods:** Grain was stored in large jars, silos, or barns. Expanding storage capacity was a sign of wealth and forward-thinking planning.
- **Ancient Perspective on Wealth:** Prosperity was often viewed as God's blessing, and planning for the future was considered wise stewardship.
- **"This Very Night":** The sudden nature of death emphasizes that life is fragile and uncertain, and material preparations cannot guarantee security.
- **Rich Toward God:** This phrase contrasts earthly treasure accumulation with spiritual investment - generosity, godliness, and eternal perspective.

Questions from the Story:

- What request did someone from the crowd make to Jesus (v. 13)? What does this person's focus on inheritance reveal about his priorities?
- How did Jesus respond to the request to arbitrate the inheritance dispute (v. 14)? What does his refusal tell us about his mission and purpose?
- What warning did Jesus give to the crowd after declining to judge the inheritance case (v. 15)? What does this reveal about the real issue behind the man's request?

- **According to Jesus, what is the relationship between life and possessions (v. 15)? How does this challenge common assumptions about security and success?**
- **How is the rich man's situation described at the beginning of the parable (v. 16)? What does this tell us about the source of his wealth?**
- **What problem was the rich man facing (v. 17)? What does this "problem" reveal about the extent of his prosperity?**
- **What solution did the rich man devise for his abundance (v. 18)? What does his plan reveal about his priorities and values?**
- **What did the rich man plan to say to his soul once his building project was complete (v. 19)? What does this reveal about his understanding of the good life?**
- **What did God call the rich man, and why (v. 20)? What does this divine assessment tell us about the man's approach to life?**
- **What sobering reality did God point out to the rich man (v. 20)? How does this challenge the man's assumption about having "many years"?**
- **What question did God ask about the rich man's accumulated possessions (v. 20)? What does this reveal about the temporary nature of material wealth?**
- **How does Jesus summarize the lesson of this parable (v. 21)? What does it mean to be "rich toward God" versus storing up treasure for oneself?**
- **What made the rich man a "fool" in God's eyes - his wealth, his planning, or something else? What was the fatal flaw in his thinking?**
- **How does this parable challenge our culture's emphasis on financial security and retirement planning?**
- **What does this story teach us about the relationship between material prosperity and spiritual poverty?**
- **How can we avoid the rich man's mistake while still being responsible with the resources God gives us?**
- **What does it practically mean to be "rich toward God" in our daily decisions about money and possessions?**