

41. Jesus Gave a Parable About a Rich Fool

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand why Jesus warned His disciples about the hypocrisy of the Pharisees because they said one thing and did another. Jesus also taught His disciples that their lives had great value. Then, Jesus warned the disciples of the danger of covetousness. In our topic today, we will see that Jesus illustrated that danger by giving the parable of the rich fool.

That parable is found in Luke 12:16-21 where we read, “Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: ‘The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, “What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?” 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. 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.’” 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?” So *is* he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.” Here, we see an illustration of the way that many people live their lives today.

Jesus began this parable by talking about a rich man whose fields yielded an abundant crop. However, he did not thank God for the way that God had blessed His fields or share anything with the needy. Instead, he became controlled by pride. His pride is shown by the thoughts of his heart. First, the man thought about the size of his barns and realized that he did not have enough room to store his crops. He decided that he would tear down those barns and build larger barns. In his thoughts, he thought that would give him enough room to store all of his crops.

Second, we see that the man thought about what his life would be like as he lived as a rich man. Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” The heart of this man was controlled by pride. Here, we see that his sinful heart caused him to talk to his soul and tell his soul how good life would be for him in the future. The soul is the mind, emotions and will. He immediately started thinking about how good his life would be for many years. He told himself that he could now enjoy the easy life. He thought about the wonderful feeling he would enjoy as he lived a life of pleasure. There was only one problem with his plan. He left God out of his thinking.

God said that the man was a fool. Psalm 14:1 and Psalm 53:1 both give the same definition of a fool. Those verses both say, “The fool has said in his heart, ‘*There* is no God.’ They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none who does good.” These verses tell us that a person is a fool when he leaves God out of his thinking. Jesus said that the man was a fool because he only planned for his earthly life and did not plan for eternity. In fact, Jesus said that he would die that night. He would never enjoy the things that he had provided for this earth. Matthew 6:19-21 says, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” This man had earthly riches but nothing of eternal value.

Jesus went on to teach the disciples that He would supply their needs. Luke 12:22-28 says, “Then He said to His disciples, ‘Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on. Life is more than food, and the body is *more* than clothing. Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds? And which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? If you then are not able to do *the* least, why are you anxious for the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more *will He clothe* you, O you of little faith?’” We see that Jesus gave several reasons why His followers do not need to worry.

First, if God gave us life, He will supply the food and clothing that we need. Second, God provides for the birds so He will certainly provide for us because we are of much greater value than the birds. Third, we cannot add to our height by worrying. If we cannot do that, then it is senseless to worry about the rest of the things that we need. Fourth, God has given the flowers of the field great beauty. In fact, Solomon with all of his beautiful clothes was not as beautiful as the flowers. The flowers have their beauty for just a few days and then they are gone. If God gives such beauty to things that only last for a few days, certainly he will clothe us. Then, Jesus gave the reason why we worry. He said that we worry because we have little faith.

The word translated “O you of little faith” is used five times in the New Testament, twice in this context. Matthew 6:30 has the same context as Luke. Jesus was the One who used it each of the five times that this word was used. Jesus actually spoke it as a tender rebuke each time that He used this word. In Matthew 8:25-26, Jesus was sleeping in the back of the boat during a great storm. Those verses say, “Then His disciples came to *Him* and awoke Him, saying, ‘Lord, save us! We are perishing!’ But He said to them, ‘Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?’ Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.”

Jesus used this word again during another storm when He came walking on the water to the disciples. Jesus told the disciples not to be afraid and Peter asked if He could come to Jesus. Then, Matthew 14:29-31 says, “So He said, ‘Come.’ And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind *was* boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, ‘Lord, save me!’ And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, ‘O you of little faith, why did you doubt?’” Finally, in Matthew 16:6-8 we read, “Then Jesus said to them, ‘Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.’ And they reasoned among themselves, saying, ‘*It is* because we have taken no bread.’ But Jesus, being aware of *it*, said to them, ‘O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread?’” Jesus wanted to teach the disciples that they could trust Him to supply their needs in every situation.

Then, Jesus went on to tell the disciples how to have treasure in heaven. Luke 12:29-34 says, “‘And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these

things. But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Here, Jesus gave some additional reasons why the disciples did not need to worry.

The people of the world do worry about these things. However, followers of Jesus do not need to worry because our heavenly Father knows that we need these things. As a result, we are told to seek the kingdom of God and God will add to us the things that we need. When we are seeking the will of God, and are doing the work of God, He will supply the things that He knows we need. In fact, Jesus said that it is the Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom. The word translated “good pleasure” means *to be well-pleased with or to be favorable to one*. The Father used this same word when He spoke about Jesus in Matthew 3:17 and said, “And suddenly a voice *came* from heaven, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’” We see that when we seek the will of God and do the work of God that He is pleased with us just as He was pleased with Jesus.

Since we can trust God to supply our needs, we can use part of what He gives us to carry out His work in this world. Jesus told the disciples to sell what they had so that they could use that money to do alms. The word translated “alms” means *to show acts of kindness*, especially to the poor. We can meet the needs of others because we can trust the Lord to meet our needs. When a money bag gets a hole in it, the money will fall out of the bag. Haggai 1:5-6 says, “Now therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘Consider your ways! You have sown much, and bring in little; you eat, but do not have enough; you drink, but you are not filled with drink; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and he who earns wages, earns wages *to put* into a bag with holes.’” In contrast, when we give to the needs of others, we are storing our treasure in heaven and do not need to fear that our treasure will be lost or stolen. Jesus said we will have eternal reward.

Jesus also pointed out another key lesson. He said that where our treasure is will also be the place where our heart is. That means that those who store up treasure on earth will have earthly values. Those who store up treasure in heaven will have heavenly values. We show our children where our heart is by our example. They can tell if we have earthly values or heavenly values by our actions. We will only be able to help our children develop heavenly values as we model those values in our own lives. Our example is the key way that we teach our children to develop godly priorities in their lives; they will follow our example as we lead them in love. May the Lord richly bless you as you provide an example to your children of godly values.