

Sermon Draft

Text: Luke 12:13–21

Sermon: “Rich in Christ”

On this Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost our attention is directed away from earthly possessions. They should not be our first and sole focus and concern in our life once we have come to realize that we will be freed for a life in following Christ. Our Psalm underscores the point of Jesus’ parable in our text from the Gospel namely, that we should look beyond the temporal to God as the true source of all our possessions and abundant life: ***“The LORD, he is God! It is he who made us. . . . The LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever”*** (Ps 100:3, 5).

Our Old Testament Reading points to the fact that all life and its possessions are meaningless and we should not be intent on chasing after them (Ecclesiastes 1:14).

After all our toils and labor in this life on earth to accumulate wealth and possession, we will leave it all behind some day. Then what we have amassed will be left to someone after us who might or might not use it wisely. God gives wisdom and happiness to those who acknowledge him. Only sinners store up wealth and are ignorant of God himself.

Our Epistle summarizes as well the issue at hand: ***“Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth”*** (Colossians 3:2). It then details ways of the world to which we should not give in. Christ is our focus.

The verses immediately following the text speak about the issue of worry and fear about life, and the Lord dismisses such concerns by referring us to nature to show how the Lord takes care of it. How much more will God not also take care of all humans! Our parable speaks less of the worry of life but more of false security.

The themes are very closely related. Worry does drive a person to seek security—and, as the parable shows, so often into false security.

Our text begins, ***“Someone in the crowd said to [Jesus], ‘Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.’ But he said to him, ‘Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?’ And he said to them, ‘Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.’ And he told them a parable, saying, ‘The land of a rich man produced plentifully’ ”*** (vs 13–16).

From what does a human being live? V 15 says: ***“for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”*** Luke threads a criticism of the rich and wealthy. And that criticism is also embedded in our parable:

“The land of a rich man produced plentifully, and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’ And he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.’ But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’” (vs 16–20).

So what are we to do when our field—whatever our field may be—yields a rich harvest? This parable does not say that we may not have an abundance of possessions. This parable also has no intentions to give us a bad conscience over a good yield of crop or a successful increase in possessions.

Why then is the rich man called a “fool”? He lives in false security. His faith is in his own abilities. The rich man was a fool because he did not consider all factors; he forgot something or we should say someone, someone very important. He left out of the equation Him from whom he receives his life and to whom it belongs. His calculation of the many future years of easy living was a mere economical reasoning based on the crops he stored (v 19); his reasoning forgot to include God. How quickly can he lose those years! ***“This night your soul is required of you”*** (v 20).

Did he officially reject God or deny his existence? We don’t know that. However, it shows how easily and quickly God can be left out of the picture. Behind all possessions is a loving God who is dearly concerned about his creation and provides and cares for it. The rich man is a fool because he does not see life as a gift from God.

Moreover, the rich man has no expectations for a life beyond death. In other words, taking life easy, eating, drinking, and being merry are all enjoyments of this world. He could have taken a “big picture” perspective, namely, that these are all the wonderful activities he will one day enjoy in heaven, a life with God.

It ended so tragically for the rich man. And, says Jesus, **“So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God”** (v 21). The true purpose of life is to be **“rich toward God.”**

What does that mean?

Being rich toward God is to put God first in thought, word and deed not just for today but as we look to our future. Every day is a gift from God and belongs to Him. It also means remembering and caring for our neighbor at home and around the world. We are to be God’s hands and voice as we live as His children.

Samuel Escobar, a missionary from South America, speaks about the stark difference between the Northern and Southern worlds. While the South—South America, Africa, much of Asia—is spiritually alive, it is materially poor. In distinction, while the North—Europe and North America—is wealthy in material terms, its spirituality is at an all-time low. It's not good to think only about oneself and one's destiny, to fail to connect it to the neighbor and to God.

We do not live by bread alone. To be rich toward God means that we are aware of our dependency on God in all facets of life and that we cannot live an autonomous life divorced from him.

Being rich toward God means we recognize God as the provider of all our possessions and all our needs. Rich in God means to turn to him in times of wealth and need, especially in our salvation.

To be rich in God is to know that in him we find mercy through the death and resurrection of his Son. To think that one does not need God is to be poor in God.

Our parable invites us to remember who we are and whose we are. As we focus on this and how greatly we are blessed each and every day we offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God.

We thank you, heavenly Father, that you have kept us this day, and we thank you for what we have received daily from you, through which you keep and preserve our life. Teach us to keep our hearts and minds on you, that we may thank and worship you daily.

Amen