

October 30, 2022  
*The Parables of Jesus: Truth to Build Your Life on*  
*The Parable of the Rich Fool*  
Luke 12: 13-21  
Rev. Peggy Peek

Today, we are beginning a new sermon series on *Jesus' Parables—Truth to Build Your Life On*. Pastor Mark asked me to start while he and Sue are away on Grandparent duty. So what is a parable? As many of you know it is a story designed to explain a moral—almost like a fable like the tortoise and the hare. And it was one of Jesus' favorite methods to communicate a truth. His parable was most often just that: a story; but the principle it illustrated was truth—biblical truth.

In 2010, I saw that there was going to be an exhibit at the Smithsonian American Art Museum in DC about Norman Rockwell and I went one Saturday morning and spent the whole day there. It was the special collection of George Lucas and Steven Spielberg, two of America's best-known filmmakers who both were collectors of Norman Rockwell's art. Rockwell's paintings and the films of Lucas and Spielberg tell stories about small town values, patriotism, children growing up, unlikely heroes, acts of imagination and life's ironies. Rockwell was a masterful storyteller who could tell stories about the adventure of growing up and of individuals rising up to face personal challenges. It was a great exhibit. And it makes sense that Spielberg and Lucas like and collect the artwork of Norman Rockwell since they are gifted storytellers through their genre, film.

I have been a fan of Rockwell since before I even knew who he was. On the rows, I have shared some of my favorite paintings. Please take one home with you today. If the one closest to you isn't the one you want, you can swap it at the end of the service today.

This painting on the screen became famous to the masses in the 1970's when it was the cover of millions of local phonebooks, including the one in Schertz, Texas. It is called "The Gossips."

Rockwell had the idea for "The Gossips" for almost 20 years but wasn't able to paint it until he thought to picture himself as the subject of the gossips' circle; he used his neighbors in Vermont as the other figures in the painting. He re-creates the life of a rumor, beginning with an elderly woman whispering about Rockwell to a neighbor. From there the tale takes off, speeding through the community from one eager person to the next, until it comes back to Rockwell himself, who confronts the gossip who began the tale in the bottom right. The lady in the middle row, both the second and third face from the left, is Mary Rockwell, Norman's second wife and mother of his children. A natural storyteller, Rockwell utilized the smallest details to tell the story in his paintings.

While I was in Seminary, I spent a year in the early 90's in Carrollton, Georgia as a Campus Ministry Intern at what now is the University of West Georgia at the Baptist Campus Ministry on campus. My supervisor was the campus minister, Bobby Evans. In Bobby's office he had a framed print of this Rockwell painting, "The Golden Rule". During one of our weekly meetings, I asked him about it. I had not seen it before, and he told me that it was one of his favorite Rockwell paintings. I wasn't really very familiar with Rockwell's work but was interested enough to have a conversation. He was, after all, my new boss and I had asked the question. That Christmas, Bobby and his wife Judy gave me a coffee table book of Rockwell's paintings. I was amazed at how many iconic pictures I recognized from the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I quickly became a fan.

Fast forward a few years, and I moved to New England after I graduated from Seminary and served as a campus minister for over 6 years in Boston. In the western part of Massachusetts, in a town called Stockbridge, was the Norman Rockwell Museum. Stockbridge was a beautiful New England village, and I visited it multiple times during family visits or with friends on my day off. This is a framed

print that I have in my office of part of the main street in Stockbridge. It's called "Stockbridge in Springtime" and one May on my birthday, I walked in front of that church and town hall and memorial with my parents during the Spring and it is a cherished memory and some cool office art.

I loved going to the Norman Rockwell Museum because the full size paintings that the Saturday Evening Post cover art came from were astonishing—I could look at them for hours and imagine the whole story behind the painting. Rockwell's gift is that he can take a snapshot in time and help communicate a whole story to the viewer. For example, this picture called "Saying Grace" is one of my favorites. You can see the workmen at a café eating breakfast before they start their busy day (my assumption.) They are watching a grandmother and grandson pray over a meal. It is sweet and poignant and timeless. How many of us take opportunities to impart faith with a generation that has not grown up in our home—we capture those opportunities to share truth in the midst of a busy adventure while we are traveling.

So, we are finally back to our text for today. Jesus has been teaching to the crowds in Luke 12. Someone in the crowd interrupts him and asks him a question. Let's look together at Luke chapter 12 beginning in verse 13 through 21.

Luke 12:13-21

**<sup>13</sup> Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me."**

**<sup>14</sup> Jesus replied, "Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?" <sup>15</sup> 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."**

**<sup>16</sup> And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. <sup>17</sup> He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.'**

**<sup>18</sup> "Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. <sup>19</sup> And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.'"**

**<sup>20</sup> "But 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?'**

**<sup>21</sup> "This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God."**

During the first century, one of the important jobs of rabbis or teachers was to settle legal disputes. When Jesus was asked to help settle a family dispute, he declined to get involved. "He knew that their greatest need was to have their hearts changed." They wanted Jesus to serve them (by giving them advice) but not to save them. Their corrupt hearts were full of greed which is an unending desire for wanting more and more of anything and thinking we will be satisfied if we ever get it. Jesus taught that true life does not depend on an abundance of possessions.

The topic of wealth is often featured in Luke's writing. In this parable, Jesus turns a question from the crowd into a teaching opportunity to address the real need: the motivation of the one asking the question. Possessions or the search for possessions can become a substitute for worship which becomes idolatry. We see this described by Paul in Colossians 3:5 **"Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry."**

Jesus states the truth in Luke 12:15b that **"Life does not consist in an abundance of possessions"** and then explains further with a parable. **"The parable is clear: a man is blessed with abundance, and he responds with self-congratulations and conversations with himself. Family, neighbors, God: all are absent from his plans."**

1. There are perils to prosperity and poverty

Proverbs 30: 8-9

**<sup>8</sup> Keep falsehood and lies far from me;  
give me neither poverty nor riches,  
but give me only my daily bread.**

**<sup>9</sup> Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you  
and say, 'Who is the LORD?'**

**Or I may become poor and steal,  
and so dishonor the name of my God.**

2. Wealth can choke the word of God

Matthew 13:22

**<sup>22</sup> 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.**

3. Wealth creates snares and temptations

I Timothy 6:6-10

**<sup>6</sup> But godliness with contentment is great gain. <sup>7</sup> For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. <sup>8</sup> But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. <sup>9</sup> Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. <sup>10</sup> For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.**

I was considering accepting an offer to move to Boston after I graduated from seminary to do campus ministry. I would have to get a secular job to earn a living, but the Baptist State convention could offer me a place to live—in a furnished missions house. I would do campus ministry around my secular work schedule. I almost didn't take the position because I was going to have to sell all my furniture—it wasn't much but one piece of furniture, I was especially fond of. I had bought a beautiful new couch with mauve and grey flowers and had made \$25 monthly payments for 2 years to pay it off. I was struggling with giving it up and that Wednesday night at church, the pastor taught on this section of 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy and I remember realizing that I was not going to let a couch keep me from following the will of God. I know that choice seems obvious now but what thing are you holding on too tightly to that keeps you from following God's leading in your life?

4. Wealth gives a false sense of security

I Timothy 6:17-19

**<sup>17</sup> 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. <sup>18</sup> Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. <sup>19</sup> In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.**

We don't see the rich man enjoying life but actually facing death. Wealth won't keep us alive and it won't give us the opportunities we missed while we were selfish and ignoring God and others. The man trades wealth on earth for an eternity in God's kingdom. "God is not impressed with our money." In the parable God can speak to the man and he calls him a fool. The man has concerned himself with his possessions and has ignored God.

Jesus then moves into an explanation of his parable in the next few verses. We read:  
Luke 12:22-34

**22 Then Jesus said to his disciples: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. 23 For life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. 24 Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! 25 Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life<sup>[a]</sup>? 26 Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest? 27 "Consider how the wild flowers grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 28 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith! 29 And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. 30 For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. 31 But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. 32 "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. 33 Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. 34 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**

- Worry is destructive. The word translated means 'to be torn apart,' in v. 22. It is the picture of a ship being tossed in a storm.
- Worry is deceptive. It gives us a false view of Life and of God. Worry even blinds us to itself. We can get to the place where we actually think that worry accomplishes good things in our lives! In Luke 12:25, we read that worrying does not "add a single hour to your life. A couple of weeks ago, Pastor Mark shared this story with the group who is reading through the Bible with him every day. He had gotten to this passage. This is what he shared: Worry is a big deal these days—even among Christians—Jesus says here that worry is a waste of time because our Heavenly Father will take care of us. Mark tells the story about an anonymous woman who phoned the Animal Welfare Society with concerns about an unidentified, menacing object or animal in a tree near her home. When asked if it was a bird, she suggested that it might be an iguana, but she wasn't sure. The "tree beast"—whatever it was—had been in place for two days, and some of her neighbors were afraid to open their windows out of fear of what it might do.

When animal welfare personnel arrived on the scene, they were prepared for the possibility of a previously abandoned domesticated animal, or even a wild beast that had wandered in from elsewhere. What they found, however, was a croissant. Apparently, the flaky French pastry had been lodged into the tree branch so high up that neighbors were unable to identify it from a distance. Someone had tossed the pastry into the tree attempting to feed the birds, but it remained uneaten. Pastor Mark then quotes Carrie Ten Boom "Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow, it empties today of its strength."

How can we overcome worry?

1. The first step is to realize that God knows our needs, so we can trust Him to meet them. Luke 12: 29-31  
**29 And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. 30 For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. 31 But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.**
2. We must look at life from God's point of view and put God first in everything.  
 Luke 12: 34  
**34 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**

We can even become so anxious about our life and possessions—all part of God's

kingdom and forget that it is God's to give. The opposite of worry is generosity that can show care for others.

3. Then God's peace will guard our minds and hearts.

Philippians 4:6-7

***6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.***

As we wrap up, I want us to look at one of the pictures from the beginning of my sermon "The Golden Rule". It is a little hard to read the letters in gold, but it is a quote of Jesus from Luke 6:31 Do to others as you would have them do to you. When we have our treasures in the right place, we can love others as Jesus has called us to do. We can trust him to take care of us and then we have the freedom to be generous with others who need help. We don't have to worry that God isn't taking care of us. We know God sent his son Jesus for us so there is nothing we need that we do not have.

As I was preparing this sermon, I got an email that I get about once a month from one of my favorite Bible Study leaders Beth Moore. She is a great storyteller—she uses words not paintings or movies. Listen to this quote she shared with her readers: *"There's no scarcity of love and grace in Jesus. Draw deeply from that well today. Drink until your soul satisfies with the certainty of your security and belonging in him. Then love others from that supply. It is being convinced we are loved completely that we love unselfishly. If we get everything right but do not love others, we missed the point of life in Christ. The highest aim of living rightly is loving freely. The religious are never more self-deceived than when we imagine our righteous behavior hides our cold hearts from the eyes of God."*

Doing unto others--It's a simple idea with big implications. And it is possible in the short term without a relationship with Christ but once we establish that relationship with Jesus Christ, then we stop the accounting. What I mean is, we are able to do unto others even if they don't do unto us because we know that God has given us his kingdom and withholds no good thing from us. Will you trust Jesus today with your future—your future here on earth and your future in heaven. This morning I will be down front if you would like to find out more about trusting Jesus Christ for the first time or if you would like to become a part of this kingdom seeking community known as Redland Baptist Church or if Jesus is dealing with you about how you are storing up treasure, the altar is open for prayer.