

A FOOL AND HIS MONEY

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Luke 12:13-21

"JESUS, MONEY, AND YOU" SERIES

#2, A FOOL AND HIS MONEY

LUKE 12:13-21 (P. 737)

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INTRODUCTION

-- Scene from Ice Age

Scrat, the neurotically hoarding squirrel in this scene is in some ways an animated version of the man in one of Jesus' best-known parables. The parable, commonly referred to as the Parable of the Rich Fool, is found in Luke 12.

Cf., Luke 12, p. 737

I. THE SETTING (VV. 1, 13)

A. VERSE 1

We find the setting for this parable in the first verse of the chapter.

Cf., v. 1

Jesus is attempting to teach a large crowd that is restless and unruly. It reminds me of the year I had a group of 7th graders for an English class the last hour of the school day. Attempting to teach them anything was always a challenge.

In verses 2-12 Jesus deals with some quite important matters - He warns against hypocrisy, emphasizes the seriousness of one's eternal destiny, and assures His disciples of God's providential care.

B. VERSE 13

Then in verse 13 Jesus is interrupted.

Cf., v. 13

Obviously, this man hasn't been paying attention to what Jesus has been talking about. Instead, he's preoccupied with another matter. As soon as Jesus pauses, this man shouts out his request - for Jesus to be an inheritance referee and instruct the man's brother (who must have also been present in the crowd) to give him his share of the family inheritance.

II. JESUS' RESPONSE (VV. 14-21)

Verses 14-21 are Jesus' response to this man's impudent request.

A. REFUSAL & WARNING (14-15)

Jesus refuses to get drawn into the sibling spat. Instead, Jesus turns this interruption into a learning opportunity.

1. The Problem (15a)

Instead of arbitrating between the two brothers, Jesus focuses on and addresses their real problem - greed.

a. Greed is a dangerous desire for accumulating more and more money and possessions.

b. Jesus warns against "all kinds of greed," implying that greed comes in a variety of forms. In fact, one variety of greed is targeted in the 10 Commandments, the tenth commandment, which says:

"You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor." (Ex. 20:17)

Coveting is a form of greed that drives us to desire and take possession of something, even if it belongs to someone else.

c. Paul warns about the destructiveness of greed in 1 Timothy 6.

1 Timothy 6:10 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.

2. The Principle (15b)

Jesus states a most important principle about money and possessions in the last part of verse 15:
Cf., v. 15b, NASV, for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.

Americans, even those in the Church, need to hear and pay attention to this, because our culture believes that life does consist of possessions, that the more you possess the better your life. Jesus rejects and warns against the idea that the goal of life is to accumulate more and better things. He illustrates His point with a story about a man who had it all - and then some.

B. PARABLE (VV. 16-21)

This story is known as the Parable of the Rich Fool. The man in the story was a fool in several ways. Let's look at just 2 of them.

1. He Had a Foolish Attitude Toward Possessions

Bible teacher Bob Deffinbaugh points out that the man's attitude toward possessions was flawed in several ways.

a. To begin with, he failed to recognize the source of his wealth.

Jesus says that it was the ground of the rich man that produced a good crop. The man may have owned the ground, but he didn't make it - it was God who made the ground. It was God who made and provided the sunlight, the rain, the oxygen and nitrogen and carbon dioxide and everything that was essential for those crops to grow. But nowhere in the story does the man acknowledge God in any way.

b. The man's attitude towards possessions was also foolish because he failed to understand the purpose of his wealth.

All that this man did with his wealth was to hoard it and use it for his own comfort and pleasure. There's not one word about using his wealth to honor God, or to invest in God's work, or to minister to those in need. His barns were full and overflowing, but he never considered giving any of his wealth away or using it for a purpose larger than himself.

c. The man's attitude toward his possessions was flawed in a third way: he relied on his possessions for his security.

The man's attitude was that as long as he had plenty of money everything was OK. He put all his trust in his possessions. What he failed to see was the inherent limitation of money and material possessions. As someone has said:

Money can buy a house, but not a home;
a bed, but not sleep; a position, but not respect; medicine, but not health; books but not wisdom; and a clock, but not time.

2. The Man Also Had a Foolish Attitude Toward Life (His Worldview).

Your worldview is how you think about and approach life. There are 2 very different worldviews presented in this parable and summarized in verse 21.

Cf., v. 21

a. The Worldview of the Rich Fool

The worldview represented by the rich fool is one that "stores up things for himself." It's a humanistic/materialistic worldview that places yourself at the center of life.

That's the worldview of the rich fool. Everything he does is directed towards himself. References to himself dominate his speech - he uses the personal pronouns "I" and "my" and "myself" 12 times in four short verses.

This humanistic/materialistic worldview says that what matters most is this life and the things of this world - things that I can see and touch.

Remember the lyrics in the old Madonna song: "We're living in a material world, and I'm a material girl." That's a humanistic/materialistic worldview. It's a worldview that says we're here primarily to accumulate material possessions and to enjoy physical pleasures. That's the worldview of the rich fool.

b. The Worldview of Jesus

Contrast that with Jesus' worldview, which is summarized at the end of verse 21 as being "rich toward God."

This worldview puts God at the center of life. Everything is directed toward Him - to knowing, pleasing and serving Him.

This worldview says that what matters most are God and the things of God's kingdom, the things that are eternal.

This is the worldview that must be held by all those who would be Jesus' disciple and follow after Him. Your worldview is critical because it will determine how you live your life. As the great theologian John Calvin wrote:

"Until men recognize that they owe everything to God, that they are nourished by His Fatherly care, that He is the author of their every good, that they should seek nothing beyond Him, they will never yield Him their service."

It isn't wrong to find pleasure in possessions or things of this world - a good meal in a nice restaurant, a ball game on a high-definition television, a new app for your cell phone. But these must never be the source of your greatest joy. Indeed, you should be able to give up all these and still retain your joy. For your greatest joy must always be in God - your greatest desire must be for His presence, your greatest delight in His glory, and your greatest satisfaction in His kingdom.

CONCLUSION

There's a story about a man who opened his newspaper one day and discovered that the date of the paper was 6 months in the future. As he read the paper, he was reading about things 6 months before they would happen. The sports page had scores of games not yet played. The business section showed what the prices of stocks would be 6 months later.

He realizes all this could make him a very wealthy man. All he needed to do would be to place some bets on underdog teams and to invest in stocks that were about to make significant gains. The more he looked at the paper, the more he saw ways he could increase his wealth and the more excited he became.

Until he turned the page and came to the obituary section and saw his own picture and the account of his own death. Suddenly, he forgot all about making money and started thinking about getting right with God.

If God were to say to you today the same thing He said to the rich fool: "Tonight your life will be demanded from you," would it change how you look at the worth of things? Would it change your attitude toward your possessions? Would it change what you consider to be most important?