WEEK 2 — THE TRAP OF MORE

Luke 12:13–21 — "Life does not consist in an abundance of possessions."

Big Idea: *If more is what makes me happy, I will never have enough.*

Read Luke 12:13–21

> *Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me."*
>
> *Jesus replied, "Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?"*
>
> *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."*
>
> *And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest.*
>
> *He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.'*
>
> *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.'*
>
> *And I'll say to myself, 'You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.'"*
>
> *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?'*
>
> *This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God."*

Heart Question: Where has "more" quietly become my definition of blessing?

Through-line: two equations — the world's (more = enough = blessing) vs. Jesus' (life ≠ abundance; rich toward God = enough).

1. GREED IS THE SIN BENEATH THE DRAMA (vv. 13–15)

A man comes to Jesus with a family dispute. His brother won't divide the inheritance. He wants Jesus to settle the argument. He wants Jesus to tell his brother what to do. But Jesus does something unexpected. The man wants Jesus to be his lawyer. Jesus decides to be his doctor. He comes asking Jesus to fix his brother, and Jesus begins examining his heart.

Because Jesus sees something beneath the argument. Something the man himself may not even recognize. **Greed**.

And here's what makes greed so dangerous: Greed might be one of the few sins you can practice your entire life without ever realizing you're doing it. Think about it.

There are sins that our society recognizes as destructive. Addiction can cost you your job. Uncontrolled anger can destroy your relationships. Infidelity can tear apart your family. But greed? Greed might get you promoted. It might get you a bigger office. A seat on a board. Recognition for your success.

And sometimes, even in the church, the person with the biggest barn gets the most influence. We live in a world that doesn't just tolerate greed. Sometimes it celebrates it.

And because we celebrate it, we've become very good at giving it respectable names. Nobody wakes up in the morning and says, "Today, I'm going to be greedy."

- ➔ We say, "I'm ambitious."
- ➔ "I'm just trying to provide for my family."
- ➔ "I'm planning for the future."
- ➔ "I'm being a good steward."

And here's the problem: Every one of those statements can be completely true. Ambition isn't necessarily greed. Providing for your family is good. Planning for the future is wise. Stewardship is biblical.

Which means greed can hide inside some of our very best intentions. And when we do begin to suspect we might have a problem, we have another way of reassuring ourselves.

We compare.

The person with one barn looks at the person with ten barns and thinks, "Now that's greed." The person with ten barns looks at the billionaire and thinks the same thing. And the billionaire? There's always somebody with more.

Greed is always easier to recognize in someone who has more than you. Isn't that exactly what happens in this passage? The man comes to Jesus convinced that the problem is his brother. "Jesus, tell my brother to divide the inheritance!"

He's looking across the room at someone else's greed, while Jesus is looking directly into his heart. And maybe that's why greed is so rarely confessed. We'll sit in a small group and talk about our struggles with anger, lust, addiction, or unforgiveness.

But when was the last time you heard somebody say:

- ➔ "I need prayer. I think I'm becoming greedy."
- ➔ "I've noticed that no matter how much I make, I never feel like I have enough."
- ➔ "I think my desire for financial security is beginning to control my decisions."

Those conversations are rare. Because we've learned to talk about money as something we manage, but not necessarily something that forms us. And Jesus is saying: Be careful. Because this isn't just about your bank account. It's about your soul.

"Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed." All kinds. Not just the wealthy person who refuses to share.

The anxious saver. The person chasing status. The person who always needs the next upgrade. The person who has convinced themselves that just a little more will finally make them secure.

And here's what makes this even more complicated. Remember Joseph in the Old Testament? Joseph stored grain during seven years of abundance in Egypt. He prepared for the future. He built up reserves.

And the Bible calls him wise. But here, Jesus tells a story about a man who stores grain during a season of abundance, prepares for the future, and God calls him a fool.

What's the difference?

Joseph stored grain to preserve lives. The rich fool stored grain to preserve his lifestyle. Joseph listened to God. The rich fool only listened to himself. Joseph's abundance became provision for others. The rich fool's abundance became protection from others.

Same activity. Completely different heart. That's why greed is so difficult to identify. Because sometimes, from the outside, greed looks exactly like wisdom.

And that's why Jesus doesn't simply tell us to avoid greed. He says, "Be on your guard." Because the danger isn't just that you might become greedy.

The danger is that you might already be greedy and have a perfectly reasonable explanation for it.

So how do you know? If greed doesn't always look like greed, and if having more isn't necessarily wrong, how can you tell when your heart has fallen into the trap?

Jesus tells a story. And in this story, we're going to discover what happens when more becomes our definition of enough.

2. BIGGER BARNS ARE THE ONLY ANSWER WHEN MORE IS YOUR DEFINITION OF ENOUGH (vv. 16–18)

The land produces abundantly. His solution is perfectly sensible by the world’s math: more crop, bigger barns, stored security. The problem isn’t having things. The problem is when having more becomes the definition of having enough.

[VISUAL: The building begins. Every “more” you name — more money, more stuff, more followers, more security, more control — becomes a block in the wall.]

3. THE BARN YOU BUILD FOR PROTECTION BECOMES YOUR PRISON (v. 19)

“Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.” Notice who the fool talks to: only himself. No God, no neighbor, no one else in the story until God speaks. More doesn’t just fail to satisfy — it walls you off. The barn he built to protect his life becomes the place he’s trapped inside.

[VISUAL: By the end of this point, the walls are up around the table and you’re preaching from inside your own barn. Say it out loud: “You can’t see me anymore. That’s what more does.” Your voice keeps preaching while you’re hidden — the man who walled himself in.]

4. EVERYTHING YOU STORE STAYS — THE ONLY QUESTION IS WHO GETS IT (v. 20)

“You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?”

[VISUAL: The barn comes down. Push the walls down deliberately — forward and down onto a mat, away from the front row. Everything he stored stays. The only question is who gets it.]

5. RICH TOWARD GOD MEANS OPEN BARNS, NOT BIGGER BARNS (v. 21)

“This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.” Enough isn’t a number you reach; it’s a direction you face.

The crash: heavy blocks, loud landing — push forward and down onto a rug or mat, away from the front row. Give the sound team a heads-up so the stream doesn’t clip. A headset or lapel mic keeps your hands free for stacking.

The line that ties it together: More doesn’t get lighter the higher it goes. It gets heavier.