

The Parable of the Rich Fool

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Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

This morning, in light of our Gospel reading, I want to begin by saying that having money in the bank is not a sin. There's nothing wrong with being wealthy, making money, or even saving some money. Money is the means by which we use as a medium of exchange for goods and services. This was the case even when Jesus walked this earth. Being prosperous and having money is not a sin. But, because of our sinful natures, we should guard against all kinds of greed. Because, as 1 Timothy 6:10 tells us, ***"...the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils..."***

Now, as we heard in our text for today, ***"Someone in the crowd said to Him, 'Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.'"*** But instead of addressing the man's individual grievance, Jesus used the occasion to teach those who were listening to guard against all kinds of greed, since our lives aren't just about the abundance of our money or possessions. And knowing how easy it is for all of us to get caught up in putting our trust in earthly possessions, Jesus went on to share an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.

Listen to the words of the parable once again, ***"The land of a rich man produced plentiful, and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?'"*** (Luke 12:16-17) The land was plentiful. It was blessed by God to produce plenty for the man. And so, the man thought that since he was the one who would bring in the crop, the one who would store it, and sell it, he was the one who deserved it all. So instead of simply building another barn or two to accommodate the plentiful harvest, ***"...he said, 'This is what I will do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and goods.'"*** (Luke

12:18) Self-assured of his harvest, I'm sure that he felt good that he could finally provide and care for himself. While God was the One who blessed the man, the man looked forward to reaping the benefits of his success. And after tearing down and rebuilding bigger barns, he would have enough for many years, not needing any support from his community, family, or friends. So he looked forward to the time when he would say to his soul, ***"Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink and be merry."***(Luke 12:19b) And while he put his trust and confidence in his earthly possessions, it WASN'T God's plan.

You see, like many working Americans today, we're encouraged to save as much money as we can for ourselves. That by doing so, one day we might have a restful and relaxing retirement. Go on vacation anytime we want, sip drinks with little umbrellas on the beach, and indulge in whims and desires throughout our "Golden Years." No more physical or emotional demands. Like the man in the parable, many look forward to taking it easy, eating, drinking, and enjoying the rest of our lives. While some of us know better, not only was this the lifestyle that the rich man looked forward to but one that he intended to bring about for himself.

There's an old story of a wealthy man who died and went to heaven. When he got there an angel took him on a tour of the celestial city. They came to a magnificent home. *"Who lives there?"* asked the man. *"Oh,"* the angel said, *"while on earth he was one of your gardeners."* The man was pleased, because if gardeners live like that, just think about the kind of mansion that he would live in for eternity. And then they came upon a palace. It was much bigger than the other one. *"Whose is this?"* asked the man. The angel said, *"She spent her life as a missionary."*

By this time, the man whose imagination was running wild was excited. But at the end of the tour, they came to a little shack with no window but a piece of cloth for the door. It was one of the most pitiful homes that he saw there. *"This is your home,"* the angel said. *"But..."* the man interrupted, *"I don't understand...this is heaven and all the other homes were fantastic. Why is my home*

so pitiful?" To which the angel said, *"I'm sorry, but we did all that we could with what you truly sent us to work with."*

You see the New Testament shares with us pictures of success and failures. The picture of the rich man whose crops produced a plentiful harvest, so much so that they decided to tear down his barns and build bigger ones. Said to his soul, ***"Soul, eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow you die."*** This picture can be entitled, the failure that looked like a success. And the picture of Jesus dying on the cross with a crown of thorns on his head, his chin drooping against his chest, nails in his hands and feet. This is the picture of success that looks like failure.

Like so many people, we all want to be successful at what we do and be fulfilled in life. But Jesus teaches us to realize that success and fulfillment do not necessarily come the way that the rest of the world expects. Instead, success and fulfillment in this life are gifts from God. And in God's eyes, it's a whole lot better to be a success that looks like a failure, than a failure that looks like a success. Because it's only by the grace of God, through the death and resurrection of His Son, that we're able to receive His forgiveness and the gift of eternal life...

God is the One who gives us our daily work and life so that we might provide for ourselves and our families. He is also the One who gives this to us so that we can grow in our faith and become rich toward Him. (That we might celebrate as the VBS kids did this week, His Monumental Greatness.) It begins at our baptism like the Marsh children are doing today during our 11 am worship service. It continues throughout our lives here on this earth, that we might become rich toward God and keep the lessons that we've learned from Him. That we might have what we need and provide for others as well. As Jesus said in Matthew 6:20-21, ***"...store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."*** And treasure in heaven is eternal life.

So, how can we be rich toward God? By thanking Him, by generously giving as Christ first gave to us, and by being rich toward others. Jesus was rich, coming from Heaven and yet He became poor for our sake, that we might be rich in Him. Showing His richness toward others through our acts of kindness, mercy, and generosity. Because while we might not always be able to profess our Christian faith, others might just be able to see the light of Christ in and through the things that we do and speak. For, ***“Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.”*** (2 Corinthians 9:6)

Being prosperous and having money is not a sin, but our Lord does teach us that we DO need to guard against all kinds of greed. And today, we're blessed to better understand God's gifts to us – His earthly blessings and more importantly, His spiritual blessings. That it's the love of money that is the root of all kinds of evil. And it's not always easy to guard against greedy living in this world, but following our Lord's teaching, we know that God blesses us and wants us to share our blessings with others. That we might generously sow some of which He has first given to us - Our time, our talents, and our treasures. Because, despite our sinfulness, He faithfully continues to provide for all our needs of body and soul. Graciously forgiving us our sins - when we repent - that His Word might continue to be fulfilled in and through us, and that we, as well as those around us, might continue to enjoy His blessings, both now and always.

In Jesus' name, Amen.