

It All Comes from God
Luke 12:13-21, 2 Corinthians 9:6-11

So friends what would you do if you took that “thanksgiving” inventory and discovered that you had so many blessings that you didn’t know what to do with them all?!

You know I have to confess that I have this problem – many of my “blessings” are sitting in my garage and in my spare bedroom taking up space, waiting for me to sort through them and organize them so that I can make use of them again at some point and time.

I’ve got old stereo equipment, furniture, books, decorations, products from previous business attempts, and 250 cassettes of the first hip-hop album I recorded still in the shrink wrap!

I remember when I left for university - I could fit everything that was of value to me into my parents van. Now all these years later I’ve accumulated so much stuff that my family can fill a 53’ moving trailer – and we’re only three people with a dog!

Do you know what I’m talking about? We are so blessed with possessions that it is a bit of a problem! What do we do with them?

Well friends that is exactly the problem which the rich man in Jesus’ parable was facing – he had such a bountiful harvest he didn’t know what to do with it all.

So what does he do? Well a couple of weeks ago we talked about how to make decisions, and we saw how we should be consulting scripture, listening to God, taking the bigger picture of participating in God’s kingdom into account as we make decisions so that we can make good decisions

So do we see the rich man in Jesus parable doing any of that? No – in fact the rich man turns inward to solve his problem

He thinks to himself, he says to himself – What shall **I** do, **I** have no place to store **my** crops – this is what **I’ll** do, **I’ll** tear down **my** barns...then store **my** grain and **my** goods

I, I, I, I – me me me me - The rich man is completely self centered

And to what end has he decided to put his surplus towards – himself! He’s going to put up his feet and relax. He has so much that there will be no need for him to work or be productive anymore.

He would be the perfect advertisement for Lotto 649 – He is saying to himself – Imagine the freedom I now have, I can take life easy, eat, drink and be merry.

And maybe when we hear this parable of the rich man and how much he had and how self focused he was we think - oh there’s just so much wrong with this picture

But before we go too far down that road I want to draw your attention to the reason Jesus told this story. A man in the crowd was trying to get Jesus to help him out in a domestic dispute over inheritance.

“Hey Jesus, you’re somebody that people respect, everyone follows you around listening to your teaching, would you tell my brother here to split the inheritance with me!”

Under the Mosaic Law the eldest son was given a double portion for the inheritance, when his father died regardless of whether or not he needed it – He was blessed!

But this didn’t sit well with the man whose brother had been blessed in this way, for whatever reason he felt the wealth should be equally shared, he deserved a portion of it.

But Jesus know that it is really just greed at work and so he refuses to play along with it

Friends we must watch out that we do not fall into the same temptation when we look around and see others *that God* has blessed abundantly. When we read the paper and see that some player on the Flames makes a few million dollars a year, or that one of Calgary’s billionaires just received a huge bonus – how do we respond.

...Boy I wish I made that kind of money

...There's no way the work they do deserves that kind of salary
...How come they have so much and other people don't – it's not fair

And maybe we might even say, doesn't the bible say something about that, shouldn't the church be protesting this?

Friends we're getting pretty close to doing the same thing this man was doing – Jesus, they shouldn't have that much money, tell them they shouldn't!

But Jesus says to us – *friends, watch out be on your guard against all kinds of greed – your life does not consist in the abundance of your possessions. – Nor should you get all up in arms about other's possessions!*

So this parable and what is wrong in it has nothing to do with the fact that this man was rich, that he had so much or perhaps even that he was going to build bigger barns to store it in.

What is wrong here is “Practical Atheism” That is to say that even though you may say you believe in God – your everyday

actions and decisions show that you don't really believe it!
And nowhere does this show up more in our lives than when it comes to dealing with our possessions and money.

The Rich man in the parable acts like there is no God.

When the harvest comes – does he thank God? No! When it becomes apparent that he has a surplus – does he thank God then? No! When he wonders what he will do with it all – does he inquire as to what God would want him to do with it? No!

This is why it's important to have a holiday like Thanksgiving – to remind us that each and every week-end on Sunday we should be coming to worship, to give Jesus Christ thanks and praise for all the blessings he gives us each day of the week!

Friends – we need to understand this point well - how often you make time for weekly worship and how you participate in it says a whole lot to Jesus Christ - about how thankful you really and truly are to him.

And it also demonstrates that we understand one of the most basic beliefs that a follower of Jesus Christ has - that we understand “it all comes from God” - It ALL comes from God!

I think the video made that point well – yes we all know that family and friends are blessings from God, but what about Eskimo pies and monkey bars – its seem trivial but they are blessings from God also... Psalm 24:1 - *The earth is the Lord's and EVERYTHING in it!*

It all comes from God – even the multi-million dollar salary of that Flames player is given to them by God, because God can choose to bless who he wants to bless however he wants to bless them.

But friends, if it all comes from God – that has some profound implications for us – for our possessions and our money! We only need to think of the other parable which Jesus told about the King who went away on a long journey and entrusted different amount of money to his servants and when he returned it was the servants who put the money to work and doubled it whom he rewarded.

But the King was not pleased with the servant who hid the money away and didn't use it or invest it – and the King had it taken away from him.

You see friends, the rich man in the parable thinks that the crops and goods belong to him – He fails to realize they are gifts given to him by God to be used wisely for the good of others – to be invested instead of hoarded - so it produces a return of some kind.

If he was a good Israelite he would have known that he could have done this by giving 10% of his crops to God 'A *tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD. (Leviticus 27:30)*

He would have also known that he was supposed to leave some of the harvest in the field for poor people to pick up and live off of - '*When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Leave them for the poor and the foreigner. I am the LORD your God.'* (Leviticus 23:22)

He also could have stored away the grain so that when future harvests didn't produce enough, he would be able to have food and have extra to share with others in need! Just like Joseph did when he was made ruler over Egypt.

But friends – the rich man is only imaginary, he doesn't exist! But you and I do, and so do the blessings that God gives us, in fact this parable reminds us that even our very life – the breath in our lungs – is a gift from God, It all comes from God.

So what do we do with the blessings? Are we practical atheists? – do we show up on Sunday and do the church thing once or twice a month, but in how we handle our possessions and our money, and our time during the week- we're not, as Jesus says, "rich towards God"

How much do you give to God? If you sat down and went over your calendar, your budget, your household inventory and counted it up – what would it show about how much you give to God?

Do you take 15 min each day to read the bible and pray, do you set aside one evening a week to be involved in a Christ Care group, are Sunday mornings off limits for anything else because that's the time you'll be worshipping with the church?

What about your money – do you know how much you give, or is that just something you find out when the tax receipt comes around in January, would it show that you spend more money going to Starbucks per month than you give to support the church?

Friends, its Thanks-Giving, its about how much you give to God because you are thankful and grateful for all the blessings he gives to us, for the very breath in our lungs – not to mention the eternal life which Christ earned for us through his death on the cross.

How much do you give to **God?**

Not to pay him back, or because you feel guilty – but because you are grateful. It's like Paul writes in 2 Cor 9:7 "*Each person should give what they have decided in their heart to*

give, not reluctantly, or under compulsion, for God loves it when you give cheerfully”

Not feeling it? Don't have enough gratitude in your heart – no worries. Paul continues in verse 8 – *and God is able to make all grace about to you...in all things, in all times*

God will give you the gratitude so that your heart is motivated to give to him.

The Rich man in Jesus parable should have given 10% back to God in gratitude, that's how God had instructed the Israelites to live in gratitude after He delivered them from slavery in Egypt, and brought them into a land of their own.

How much more should we as Christians, who through Christ sacrificing his life, have been rescued from slavery to sin and have been given the promise of eternal life in the new heavens and earth be willing to give at least 10% of our time and money back to God to show our gratitude.

Friends – this thanksgiving do something different, make this the starting point for a whole year of giving back to God at least 10% of your time and money, and watch what happens.

The Rich fool planned to hoard his wealth and the foolishness of his actions was shown by the fact that all his possessions and wealth couldn't save his life when it was asked of him.

But giving to God enriches and extends your life – the more you acknowledge and live in dependence upon Him, the more He blesses you – and the more you can give back to him, it's an amazing cycle of thanksgiving.

And the cycle begins when we truly believe and act upon the fact – that it's all from God

Amen.