

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 - according to writer Tom Vanderbilt – we store it. Back in 2005 – Americans owned 1.875 billion square feet of personal storage in approximately 40,000 facilities.

This represents a 75% increase from all the way back in 1995. And this increase isn’t because we’re all living in smaller condos and high rise apartments with no closet space.

In fact the square footage of the average house increased from 1660 sq ft in 1973 to 2400 sq ft by 2004, while at the same time the size average family got smaller.

As I said – when we moved... our family filled a 53’ trailer and we’re three people and a dog!

So, given these statistics I’m sure that it’s easy for most of us to relate to 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. What is He going to do with it all?

Well friends, you may recall that when we've talked about making decisions here at Valleyview we've learned about how we should be consulting the scriptures, listening to what God wants to say to us...

Looking at the bigger picture of God's kingdom and how we can participate in what God is doing in our world, all those kinds of things are what we factor in when we have to make a decision about solving a problem...

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 – me me me me - This rich man is completely self absorbed and self centered

So its no surprise that he ends up deciding that the solution to his problem is 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.

Friends – the rich man in Jesus parable would be the perfect spokesperson for Lotto 649 – He is saying to himself – Imagine the freedom I have now... all this surplus - I can take life easy, eat, drink and be merry.

Now I'm betting that when we hear about this self absorbed rich man splurging on himself we think - oh there's just so much wrong with this picture

But before we go too far down that road friends... I want to draw your attention to the reason why Jesus was telling this story.

In verse 13 we read that a man in the crowd that was attempting to persuade 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... Why don’t you tell my brother here to split the inheritance with me!”

What’s going on here? Well under the Law of Moses, when the father passed away the eldest son was given a double portion of the inheritance, regardless of whether he needed it or not – He was blessed!

So someone had died and his eldest son had received a double portion and his younger brother was like – really? You get double... you don’t need double, you’re already a success!

You don’t need that, why don’t you give some to me – after all I could really use it. I’ve just leased a new donkey and my wife could really use a new cloak...plus we have another kid on the way... and our oldest is going temple school!

Doesn’t sound like greed...does it friends, but Jesus sees right through this noble “share the wealth” ploy and 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 **that God** has blessed others more abundantly than us.

Right now professional Hockey players and NHL Owners can’t come to an agreement on how many millions of dollars per year they should make – how do we respond when we see that?

Or how do we respond to when our MLA’s have to make decisions about what they should receive for their pension?

Are we like – really? You don’t need all that.

Nobody should get that much money for just playing games... not when we could all really use it.

What do they do that deserves 2 million a year? I work my butt off just to get by...

There's so much good that money could do elsewhere!

Doesn't the bible say something about that... like - The love of money is the root of all evil. So shouldn't the church be protesting this and making a case to give the money to the poor?

Friends all this may be true – but it's also true that much of our reaction to other people's prosperity is motivated by greed - to be sure it's dressed up with noble sentiments, but at the heart its still greed.

And so we're reacting the same way as the man who was shouting to Jesus – *“Jesus, tell my brother to split the inheritance with me...”*

In response Jesus says – *“friends, watch out be on your guard against all kinds of greed – your life does not consist in the abundance of your possessions.”*

Which means that we shouldn't get up in arms about other people possessions either

That's why I cautioned us about getting so wound up about the rich man in Jesus' parable who was so self-absorbed – because our reaction might just reveal to us that we have some greed issues, just like the man who was all wound up because his “greedy” brother wouldn't share the inheritance.

You see friends what is wrong in Jesus parable has nothing to do with the fact that this man was rich, that he had so much he didn't know where to keep it all, or even that he was going to build bigger barns to store it in.

What's wrong in Jesus parable is this man's “Practical Atheism.” Which means that we simply give lip service to believing in God – but our everyday actions and decisions show that we don't really believe there is a God.

And friends nowhere is this more evident than in how we handle 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!

And friends those of us who get all wound up about the selfishness of this rich man **also** act like there is no God as well, even though we may appeal to God to judge the apparent greediness of another.

We act like there is no God because we fail to see that if God blessed him with abundance – God is also perfectly capable of blessing us with abundance.

If we squabble and quarrel over things because we believe there is a limited supply of pie to go around between us...then friends we don't really know the God who created everything and sustains everything and is more than capable of providing more than what we need to bless us each and every day.

This is why it's important to have a holiday like Thanksgiving – to remind us that when we gather today on Sunday we are

coming to worship to give Jesus Christ thanks and praise for all the blessings he gives us each day of the week and to ask Him for whatever we need – even for more than what we need – because it shows we know Christ is the unlimited source of all our blessings!

So Friends – will you be celebrating a Christian thanksgiving or a secular thanksgiving this year?

You see a secular thanksgiving is when we realize that we have so much, and other people have so little – and so we're thankful we got our share of the pie and that we're not the ones in need and so we give to try and share the wealth and ease the guilt.

But a Christian thanksgiving starts with recognizing that all of our blessings come from God – ALL of them – and there's no limit to what God can bless us or others with.

And because it's an unlimited supply we can be free and generous with our blessings and bless others though giving out of them – as a means of demonstrating our thankfulness to God

A very different kind of Thanksgiving isn't it.

Because the scripture reveals to us friends that "it all comes from God" - It ALL comes from God!

and the video certainly made that point – we know that family and friends are blessings from God... but what about Eskimo pies, monkey bars, and chicken nuggets – it might seem trivial but they are blessings from God also...

Psalm 24:1 teaches us "*The earth is the Lord's and EVERYTHING in it!*" *Every – Thing!*

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 amounts of money to his servants.

When he returned it was the servants who put the money to work and doubled it who were rewarded.

The King wasn't not pleased with the servant who hid the money and didn't use it or invest it – and in the end what had been given to him was taken away.

Friends, the rich man makes the same mistake. He thinks that the crops and goods belong to him to do with as he sees fit. He fails to realize they are gifts given to him by God to be used wisely for the good of others – to be invested.... Not hoarded – To produce a return of some kind and multiply.

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 his harvest in the field for poor.

'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 God made him ruler over Egypt.

But friends, we can speculate all we want about the coulda, shoulda, woulda for this rich man – the fact is that He is imaginary, he doesn't exist!

But you and I do... and so do the blessings which God has given to 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 we 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? And would that amount that you give to support God's church be less than what you spend on going to Starbucks per month?

Friends, its Thanks-Giving, its about how much you give back 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.

As 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 friends because Paul continues in verse 8 – *and God is able to make all grace about to you...in all things, in all times*

God will even give you the gratitude so that your heart is motivated to give to him. All things come from God –even the blessing of having a heart full of motivating gratitude.

You see 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.

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

So Friends – this thanksgiving I want to challenge you to do something different, I want to challenge you to take a Thanksgiving inventory – but don’t do the typical list of all the things you’re glad that you have.

Instead make a list of all that you give – on a day to day basis – back to the giver of all things, out of Thanks.

And to qualify that I’m going to say that when you give it to God – that means it’s not at your disposal to use anymore, and

it's being used for something that promotes or supports the kingdom of God in some way.

So, What do you give back to God out of thanks? To show that you believe that it *All* comes from Him?

Let's Pray.....