

The Parable of the Rich Fool
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 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 it would appear we store it!

According to some storage stats I found on a “decluttering website”ⁱ 1 out of every 10 Americans rents offsite storage—the fastest growing segment of the commercial real estate industry over the past four decades.

25% of people with two-car garages don’t have room to park cars inside them and 32% only have room for one vehicle.

The U.S. has apx 50,000 storage facilities, five times the number of Starbucks. There is 7.3 square feet of self-storage space for every man, woman and child in the nation.

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 had sermon series on Decision-making we've learned that we should be consulting the scriptures, and other Christians, listening for guidance from the Holy Spirit, consider how Jesus is calling us to do greater things that He said we would do... by looking outside ourselves to pursue God's Kingdom purposes...

So, does the rich man in Jesus' parable doing anything similar to this? No – instead he 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, build bigger ones... then store **my** grain and **my** goods

I, I, I, I – me me me me - This rich man is completely self-absorbed and self-centered. So it's 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 friends, before we go too far down that road... I want to draw your attention to the reason why Jesus was telling this story - which also reveals to us more about who Jesus is as we are seeking to really know Jesus from the scripture.

So turn to Luke 12 and look at vs.13 and we read that a man in the crowd that was attempting to persuade Jesus to help him out in a domestic dispute over inheritance.

What is going on here? Well in the preceding paragraph Jesus has been telling the crowd that when they are brought before the authorities on account of Him, the Holy Spirit will help them with their defense and what to say.

And it seems to me that someone in the crowd decides to take advantage of Jesus mentioning the court system to air his own legal grievance to Jesus.

You see according to 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! (Deuteronomy 21:17)

So this man's father had passed away and his older brother 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!

Now that doesn't sound like typical greed...does it friends, but Jesus sees right through this noble "share the wealth" ploy and refuses to play along with it – ironically from what we learned last week saying "*who appointed me a judge over your case*" but again here we see another example that Jesus isn't someone you can co-opt to your cause or personal situation.

Instead Jesus uses the opportunity to warn the crowd to be on guard against "ALL kinds of greed" especially this kind that masquerades as fairness and justice.

So brothers and sisters, 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.

So how do we respond when we hear about professional athletes who get signed to play for millions of dollars?

How do we respond when our MLA's, MP's or City Councilors have to make decisions about their salaries or their pensions?

How do we react when we hear about changes to the tax rates that will affect those with far higher incomes than our own?

Are we like – really? You don't need All that! Nobody should get that much money for just playing games... What do they do that deserves 2 million a year? I work my butt off just to get by...

There's so many other people and so much good that money could do elsewhere!

And doesn't Jesus say something about that in the bible... like "*money is the root of all evil.*" (1 Tim 6:10) So shouldn't the church be protesting this and making a case for equality and that this money should be used to support social services?

Friends all this may be true – except that it was Paul, and not Jesus, who wrote the love of money is the root of all evil... but

what we learn about Jesus from situations like this is that Jesus not only sees when someone has more than someone else, but he also sees everything that is in our hearts...

And it's very easy for the inequality that exists in our world to blind us to innate greed that lies within our own hearts.

We must recognize that much of our reaction to other people's prosperity comes from a subtle type of greed - to be sure it's dressed up with noble sentiments, but 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 is the Rich Man's “practical atheism” which means that he simply gives lip service to believing in God – but in his everyday actions and decisions he shows that he doesn't really believe there is a 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!

Friends, practical atheism is most evident in how we handle our possessions and money and how we react to the way in which other people handle theirs, like the moral indignation we instinctively feel for the rich man in Jesus' parable.

This is acting 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.

Moreover we don't really know Jesus as God the provider in this way either... we forget that just 3 chapters earlier in Luke, Jesus took very limited resources of 5 loaves of bread and two fishes, and multiplied them to feed a crowd of five thousand men – probably closer to seven thousand maybe even ten thousand if you take into account women and children.

So that's 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 to provide for whatever we need – even for more than what we need – because it shows we know Christ as God is the unlimited source of all our blessings!

So friends, will you be celebrating a Christian thanksgiving or a secular thanksgiving this year? Hadn't thought about that before? Let me explain the difference...

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 to express our gratitude we give thanks by sharing a bit of our blessings with those who are less fortunate - to 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 and because it is a blessing that has been graciously given to us - 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.

That's a very different kind of Thanksgiving isn't it?!

Friends, Jesus parable serves to remind us that ALL our blessings come from God and our opening 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 blessings.

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, even your weekly schedule 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 Jesus with His Church?

And 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 Christ's church be less than what you spend on going to Starbucks per month?

Friends, its Thanks-Giving, it's 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.

So How much do we 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 of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under*

compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

Not feeling it? Don't have enough gratitude in your heart – no worries friends, because as we read in a more literal Greek translation of vs. 8 “and *God is able to make all grace abound to you...in all things, in all times*”

So God through His undeserved grace can even give you the gratitude you need - 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? May you have a blessed thanks- Giving. Amen.

ⁱ <https://www.becomingminimalist.com/clutter-stats/>