

**The Parable of the Rich Fool – Overcoming Self-ish Resistance  
Luke 12:13-21, 2 Corinthians 9:6-11**

Well brothers and sisters, to say that 2020 has thus far proven to be a year of unexpected challenges and obstacles, is probably a bit of an understatement, calling it a “dumpster fire” might be a more evocative description of how we are experiencing the far-reaching effects of this pandemic.

Its certainly not something that we would call a year of blessings, even when we come out on the other side of it and look back on things it is unlikely that we would will call this a year of blessings.

But brothers and sisters, it is during times like these that we need to be reminded of the scripture commands in 1 Thess 5:18 to *“give thanks in ALL circumstances (even a pandemic); for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”*

But not because we are celebrating our afflictions and saying that what is bad is somehow good...

Nor is it because we are attempting to prematurely figure out how God will bring about his good will through some affliction before He reveals that to us later on...

But its because afflictions cause us to lose sight of existing blessings in the same way that just one negative comment or criticism can undo many positive comments.

You might post a picture of yourself on social media, and your friends and family might all respond positively to it and compliment it and so on. But it only takes one negative criticism from a complete stranger and now you’re fixated on what they think is wrong instead of others have said is good.

In the same way the afflictions of 2020 can cause us to lose sight of all the many good things that the Lord has blessed us with and continues to bless us with, and cause us to become fixated on a particular pandemic affliction.

But giving thanks in ALL circumstances is how we break out of this and protect our hearts from resentment and greed.

And in order to give thanks properly – it helps to intentionally identify the blessings which God has given to us, to take a thanksgiving inventory and count your existing blessings.

Now I suspect that many of us would be surprised at how many blessings we have – that we have forgotten about or have taken for granted, especially our material blessings.

Brothers and sisters, I wonder... what would you do if you took a “thanksgiving” inventory and discovered that you had so many blessings that you didn’t know what to do with them all?!

I personally 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.

Do you know what I’m talking about? Maybe you can relate to this as well on some level.

Because the statistics bear witness to the fact that many of us in North America are so blessed with material possessions that it is a bit of a problem! And what do we do with them? Well it would appear we store them!

Let me give you some storage statistics I found on a “decluttering website.”<sup>i</sup>

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 approx 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.

So, given these statistics I’m sure that it’s easy for most of us to relate to the problem that 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?

Well let's take a look at what he did. The text says 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.

Now I'm betting that when we hear about this self-absorbed rich man splurging on himself it gets us a bit triggered and we say *"Oh wow! I can't even... there's just so much wrong with this picture!"*

But brothers and sisters before we go too far down that road...

I want to draw your attention to the reason why Jesus was telling this story - So take your bibles out and 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 brothers and sisters. But... Jesus sees right through this noble "*share the wealth*" ploy and he refuses to play along with it.

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

So to 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 the question for us concerning greed... is about How do we respond... How do we respond when we hear about pro athletes who get signed to play for millions of dollars?

How do we respond when hear how much our MLA's, MP's or City Councilors get paid for their salaries or their pensions?

Or maybe you've seen that viral video which uses grains of rice to make a graphic illustration of just how much Jeff Bezos' net wealth amounts to in comparison to others – and if you have... how do you respond to it?

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 who have so little, there's no way you actually need that much money!

Besides 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?

Now brothers and sister all these objections may be true – except that it was Paul, and not Jesus, who wrote the love of money is the root of all evil...

but in situations like it's less about the inequality that exists and more about Jesus wanting us to looking deeper into our own responses because there is something in our own hearts that He wants us to see.

The truth is that 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 – and blessings - comes from a subtle type

of greed - to be sure it's dressed up with noble sentiments, but it's 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 blessings 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.

And we our first instinct is to find him guilty of "being rich and storing his wealth" instead of finding him guilty of ignoring God and acting like He is responsible to no one with the blessings that have been assigned to him.

Brothers and sisters if we get caught up in the squabble and quarreling 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.

That's why it's important to count our blessings...

It reminds us that when we gather today in worship we are coming 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!

And because God has an unlimited supply and because our blessings have been graciously given to us - we can be free and generous with our blessings and bless others through giving out of them – as a means of demonstrating our thankfulness to God.

So friends, Jesus parable serves to remind us that ALL our blessings come from God, echoing Psalm 24:1 which proclaims *“The earth is the Lord’s and EVERYTHING in it!” Every – Thing!*

It all comes from God – even the billions of dollars that Jeff Bezos earns from Amazon.com - 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 profound implications for us – for our possessions and our money!

Remember what we learned last week from the parable Jesus told about the Master who went away on a long journey and entrusted different amounts of “talents” to his servants. When he returned it was the servants who put the money to work and doubled it who were rewarded.

The Master was 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.

Brothers and sisters, the rich man in this parable 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 only exists to teach you and I about what we are supposed to be with the blessings that 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? And would that amount that you give to God be less than what you spend on Starbucks for the year?

Now brothers and sisters, as I bring up these examples of how we can avoid being practical atheists with our money and material possessions I want to say that Valleyview has grown tremendously in our willingness to be rich towards God.

When I arrived here, thirteen years ago, this was not the case and the church's financial situation certainly reflected it.

But over the years, as we have learned and responded to what the scripture teaches us on this matter, by the grace of God we have grown and Valleyview's ministry is well supported.

Some of you who have been at Valleyview since that time may remember just how far we have come in this.

And brothers and sisters – if the Lord can help us grow to be rich towards God, then I know it is also possible for the Lord to help us continue to grow... by using our blessings to go out and be a blessing to others.

In fact, what Paul talks about in 1 Cor 9:11 has happened to us at Valleyview. Paul says *"You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion..."*

Brothers and sisters, the Lord has enriched us at Valleyview through the actions of a complete stranger taking a sizeable amount of money that he had saved up for himself, but then realizing he did not need it... instead it should be given to help others. So, he saw one of our community signs – and decided to give us the money so we can make sure it helps others.

We have been enriched – so that we can be generous brothers and sisters, but this is also proving to be something that is a challenge for us to actually go out and do.

So, this morning's message is meant to help us overcome our resistance by realizing that not going out to bless others in Jesus' name... is very much like being a rich fool who hoards his blessings and lives as a practical atheist.

If a complete stranger can reach out to us and bless us so that we are enriched to bless others – surely, we who are filled with the power of the Holy Spirit can reach out and pass that blessing on to someone in the name of Jesus.

Perhaps what we need to do in addition to counting our material blessings is also count the people who we come in contact with every day.

Who are the people that you work with? Who do you contact because of your work? Who is working for you?

Who do you socialize with? Who lives next to you? Who do you bump into in your neighborhood when you go on a walk?

When you go grocery shopping – is the store empty of people? When you drive through Tim's or Starbucks is anyone working there?

Brothers and sisters – are we living like practical atheists with regards to the people who cross our path everyday? Do we believe these are just random meetings – have we not considered that God brings people into our path for His purposes?

Do we simply interact with others in our daily business without even considering if the Lord has something in mind for His purposes as we interact with them?

Brothers and sisters – I know I'm guilty of being a practical atheist in this way in my day to day interactions with people.

Let us take advantage of the opportunity that the Lord has given us with the Be the Blessing 2.0 project to make changes in this and start looking for how the Lord wants to bless someone we interact with.

Paul writes to us in 2 Cor 9:8 *“And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.”*

I think we can see and all agree that God has blessed us abundantly and we have what we need – what remains brothers and sisters is for us to go out... and be abundant in all sorts of good works.

Brothers and sisters, the Lord has caused us to grow an enabled us to be rich towards God, now let us be obedient with the blessings that come from that – and go out and be generous in Jesus’ name to someone whom the Lord has put into our life.

As Paul writes... in 2 Cor 9:6 Remember this: *“Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.”*

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

Be the Blessings brothers and sisters – Amen.