

The Eleventh Sunday of Pentecost

July 31, 2016

Prayer of the Day: O God, you reveal your mighty power chiefly in showing mercy and kindness. Grant us the full measure of your grace that we may obtain your promises and become partakers of your heavenly glory; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Verse of the Day: Alleluia! Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him." Alleluia! (John 14:23).

Sermon Text: Luke 12:13-21

A husband and wife team ran a very successful business. They hired a smart staff to provide brilliant insights. They poured money into advertising. They hired a superior quality control team. They strove to make their product the best product on the market. Because they managed the business well, they made quite large profits. After years of hard work, the couple retired early.

One day in retirement, the man told his wife that when he died, he wanted her to put half of their life's savings into a bag and place it in the attic. The plan was: when he died and his soul went up into heaven, he could grab the money and take it with him.

About a month after devising this plan, the man grew deathly ill. The wife knew that the end was near. So, she took half of their life's savings, put it into a bag, and placed the money in the attic. The man died a week later. A little while after the funeral the wife remembered the money she placed in the attic. Curiosity compelled her to check on it. So, she climbed into the attic—and to her amazement—discovers the money still there! With her eyes glued to the bag, she thought to herself, "I knew I should have put the money in the basement."

Luke 12:13-21

¹³ Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me."

¹⁴ Jesus replied, "Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?" ¹⁵ Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

¹⁶ And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. ¹⁷ He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.'

¹⁸ "Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹ And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry."'

²⁰ "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?'

²¹ "This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God."

We have a phrase to summarize that man's money-saving-plan: "You can't take it with you." That timeless phrase points out a very obvious truth: when you die, your money, your possessions, your stuff— it all stays on earth.

Do you wonder how that even became a phrase? Someone did not randomly dream it up. It came together only after watching people cling to their stuff with white-knuckled fists.

Does that phrase apply to you? Does a part of you kind of wish that you could put your money in the attic so that you can snag it on your way out of this world? God knows just how powerful the gnawing hunger of greed is. That is why he cries out: **BE RICH IN GOD!** *Guard your heart from greed and Store up eternal treasures.*

When you look at the context surrounding our reading, you wonder if Jesus ever intended to say that at all. He is busy teaching these massive swarms of people about life's true goal. One day everyone in the world is going to stand before the judgment throne of God. God's eyes will penetrate the most hidden thoughts of your heart. Hypocrites who look like good believers, but really have secretly rejected God's Word will never fool the One who reads the heart. Believers who acknowledge their trust in the Son of Man will never forfeit their eternal inheritance ([Luke 12:1-12](#)).

Understand what Jesus is actually doing. He clearly explains how people enter heaven. God looks for a heart full of faith and love for him— and no one can fool him. So, he encourages all people of all ages to continue persevering in their Christian faith.

That causes a certain man's ears to perk up. He hears the voice of Jesus— and he has a question for him. So, he frantically pushes his way through this thick crowd, shoving people out of his way and forcing himself to the very front. The minute his eyes lock on Jesus, he blurts out: "**Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.**" Just think about this— this man can ask the Son of God about anything! So, what does he ask about? Money. He really does not ask a question either; he orders a command. "*Tell my brother to give me my money, and then I will be on my way!*"

He knows Jesus is a rabbi. Rabbis studied civil law. So, rabbis could serve as a mediator or a judge and divide inheritances. That is all this man wants from Jesus— simple legal advice. He acts as though Jesus has nothing valuable to offer him. Just look at [verse 13](#). Do you see who this man is concerned about? "My" inheritance that is to be split with "me!"

Compare that selfish attitude with Jesus' parable. "**The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.'**" "Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I'll say to myself, 'You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.'" ' The man in the parable— who is he concerned about? Himself! "*What shall I do?*" and "My crops, my barns, my grain, my goods" and "*I will consult with myself...*" Thirteen times he brings up the first-person singular pronoun! Thirteen times he reveals that money is the only thing important in life!

You see, deep inside the hearts of these two men rests a temple. Behind those temple doors sits a throne with the almighty money ruling. These fools honestly believe that after gaining money they will have everything necessary for life.

That is what greed does, right? The Greek word characterizes “greed” as *having more*, then *receiving more*, and *wanting more*. Greed stops at nothing until it rules your heart.

That, my friends, is what makes greed wicked. Greed is not bad because it might steal time or stuff away from other people. Greed is not bad because it makes you look selfish. Greed is evil because it wants to throw God out of your heart. It will stop at absolutely nothing until your love revolves the stuff of this world!

So greed tells you: if you are spending time in worship, then you have less time for vacationing or sporting events. Would you not feel better on vacation or at the baseball diamond? Greed hates it when you give an offering to God because it screeches that you have less money for yourself. A greedy heart hates using the Bible to shape life because it means you cannot obey the habits that feel good to you. If you cave in to greed’s calling, then love for God will disappear and money will become your goddess.

Did you hear what God calls people who love money more than him? **“Fool!”** Completely senseless to understand what life is all about! Because when you die, can you bring your money from this life and hand it over to God as a payment into heaven? Absolutely not!—and that rich fool found that out the hard way. If you sacrifice your relationship with God for temporal pleasures, then you will be a fool for all eternity!

So, *Guard your heart from greed. BE RICH IN GOD and Store up eternal treasures.* The relationship God has with you lasts much longer than what greed labels as “treasure.” Money may last for a lifetime, but heaven’s treasure lasts an eternity.

Because of that fact, God so loved the world that he gave you something. No, not treasure chests filled with gold; he sends his only Son! Jesus is the riches you need. Never once does Jesus’ heart shift its love onto anything else but God. He never flaunts his title of “Rabbi.” He does not place his own personal enjoyments ahead of hearing of God’s Word. He loves his God with an undivided heart— and he does so in your place! That is the value Jesus places on your life— that he would gladly give up the world for you!

So he does. He leaves the praises of angels and his Kingly throne in heaven. He lays aside the power he possesses as God. He allows people to insult him, arrest him, spit on him, beat him, crucify him. He allows his blood to be shed! By all human accounts, Jesus loses everything! By God’s judgment, Jesus possesses everything!

His rich relationship with God continues. Jesus rises from the dead. He re-enters heaven’s eternal glory. It does not stop there. The blood of Jesus pays your ticket out of an eternity spent in hell. His resurrection declares that you are purchased for God. His ascension into heaven proclaims that you belong to God!

That is how much he values you! Your life is more valuable than an abundance of possessions. Your life is worth Jesus giving his life for you!

Understand what truly makes you rich. The money you and I have are wonderful blessings. Yet, if it abandons you in death, how valuable is it? Not very. What is valuable is a heart full of faith— because the faith God created in your heart is what lets you into heaven’s eternal treasury.

You already have the most priceless riches ever! You can go outside these doors with the confidence that heaven is your home! So, make sure that nothing snatches it from you! Continue *Storing up eternal treasures*.

Imagine your heart like one of those giant barns (from our parable). You get to spend your life *storing up eternal treasures*.

The rich fool believed that his own voice was all he needed to hear in life. In your life, your heart may wander into greed, using sporting events or vacations to steal you away from the voice of God. Understand, these are blessings from God; they help you relax and make memories with your family. Watch out that they do not fill up your schedule and prevent you from coming here and storing up the promises of God! Jesus loved you so much that he put aside what would please him because he knows his perfect life would unleash eternal pleasures for you! You, walking in the steps of the Savior, put on that new self that wants to fill your heart with the Words of your loving God!

The rich fool believed that his money-stuffed barns gave him true happiness. Notice how that man got rich in the first place. He did not make his crops grow; the ground did. The God who gave this fool riches is the same God who gives you and me money.

Greed may crop up in your heart. It will tell that you giving an offering means you are losing something valuable. Left unchecked, greed will stop at nothing to make sure your offerings dry up and these doors are shut, so that you never have to hear God’s voice again!

So, put on the new self which imitates God. See how Jesus laid aside glory in heaven and praise on earth so that he could buy you out of hell. See how God causes moneys to provide for you. See what God has given you to give. Through your offerings, you are maintaining a precious house of worship. You are supporting a preacher of the God’s pure Word. You are feeding your faith.

You know, God could send out his Word without your offerings and without a pastor— but he does not. Instead, he chooses to have you give his blessings back to him. He chooses to have you declare your complete love for him by giving him the money your world loves so dearly.

BE RICH IN GOD! *Store up eternal treasures* for yourself! Not because you are going to make a plan to do. Not because you are people who have this driven will-power to succeed. You can guard your heart from all greed because God lives in you.

God teaches you that “You can’t take it with you.” When you die, your money, your possessions, your stuff stays on earth. Only fools believe that true life reaches its full potential in stuff.

You are no fool. You are God’s blood-bought child. You recognize the blessings you have are just that— blessings. You understand that God showers gifts on you so that you can use them to store up eternal treasures for yourself.

Greed’s gnawing hunger is powerful, but Christ has crushed it. Now he equips you to **BE RICH IN GOD!** *Guard your heart from greed and Store up eternal treasures*.