

The Parables of Jesus

Lesson 10

Parable of the Rich Fool – Luke 12:13-21

Jesus reveals to us why the Christian life is deep and challenging. Our lives are judged based on the spiritual first then the physical.

Setting for the Parable

This parable is the high point in a number of teachings by Jesus to literally thousands of listeners (Luke 12:1). Jesus covered quite a few topics in succession before getting to this parable of the rich fool...

- Beware of religious hypocrites
- Judgment is coming for all
- The fear of the Lord
- You are valuable to God
- We must acknowledge Jesus as Lord
- The Holy Spirit will be your teacher

Then following this parable He went on to talk about...

- Stop worrying
- You are valuable to God
- Seek first the Kingdom of God
- Love your neighbor
- Prepare for His return

Telling of the Parable

After covering that first set of topics, a man in the crowd shouts out, "Teacher...tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." Jesus responds, "Who has made me judge over you to decide these things?"

Jesus then takes opportunity to issue the warning we find in the parable of the rich fool. He begins by saying, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions."

Then to further illustrate, Jesus creates the parable of the rich fool.

Jesus began with an introduction of the main character...the rich fool. This farmer was enjoying great success. He had worked hard and now the fruits of his labors were pouring into his storehouses. He

found himself in a dilemma though. He had such a large harvest that his bins and silos and barns couldn't possibly contain everything.

So the farmer held a planning meeting with himself. Listen to Jesus explain the man's dialogue with himself, "This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. And I'll say to myself, You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry."

On the surface, most people would think this man is perfectly fine with what he has done. The things he is planning to do sounds perfectly reasonable. He's built a solid business and has great personal wealth. He has worked hard throughout his life and now he's planning to relax and take life easy.

The man's planning meeting is interrupted by God himself. God shocks the rich man by saying, "You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?"

So what's wrong with what he's done? Why is he called a fool?

Meaning of the Parable

This man was monetarily rich but spiritually bankrupt. The parable of the rich fool exposes the misuse of God's gifts. A person who ignores God, the owner of his soul, by placing material items and pleasure before Him becomes a fool. This parable places the spiritual life over the physical life. Our spiritual life must control our physical life. Motivations of our heart will always control our attitudes and actions.

Now the Bible does tell us to work hard (Proverbs 10:5), to plan (Proverbs 21:5) and to save (Proverbs 13:11). It tells us that these ways...working, planning and saving...are much better than laziness, no planning and wasting our money.

The man from the parable became wealthy with the things of the world but was considered foolish by God for ignoring what was really important.

Jesus made this statement in Matthew 6:19-21, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

The parable of the rich fool graphically informs us that we should not find our identity in the things we acquire...such as our possessions, status, wealth and achievements.

The parable of the rich fool gives us many lessons about God's demands on our personal lives. The first lesson calls us to always place our physical lives in subjection to our spiritual lives. In other words, God must be our first love. He must be the One we admire, acknowledge and approach for daily guidance. Our spiritual life must be our highest concern. We prove our love by committing to follow Jesus and His teachings. We then submit our physical lives to our growing spiritual lives (Romans 12:1-2).

After our spiritual life is made our highest priority, then we work on the motivations which drive our actions. This parable teaches us several keys for correct motivation. The first is that we should work

hard because we need to provide the daily needs for ourselves and our families. Next, we should work hard to offer support for those in need and finally, work hard in order to be a good Christian witness.

We should plan our future knowing that God is in control and that we may not receive the blessing of one more breath. We should be good stewards of the things with which God has blessed us realizing that one day we will stand before Him in judgment.

Get This!

Jesus teaches that normal people become fools when they fail to place their physical lives in submission to their spiritual lives. This is what makes Christianity so deep and challenging. Actions are judged by motivations. The rich man had proper physical activities but his motivations were wrong...and this made him a fool.

God loves you. He blesses you with a valuable life full of gifts, talents and material blessings. He expects you to use them to your highest potential. God gives you the resources to become wise and holds you accountable for your use of these resources. Wisdom begins by bending your knee and bowing before Him. All of us need to commit to studying God's word, praying always, loving our neighbor and worshipping Him.