

A Richer Harvest

8th Sun. after Pent. – 08/03/25 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: Luke 12:13-21 Pastor Keith Besel

v. 21 **“So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”**

Introduction

- ✘ The sad reality, folks, is that we all, so easily, can become so hyper-focused on the “business” of seeking financial and material security that we don’t realize we’re actually doing a bad job of it.
 - ➔ For one thing, God is very clear in Scripture that our riches; both our money and our things, will not bring us eternal life. Why? because one day we will die and none of that, no matter what you tell people to put in your casket with you, none of it will be able to go with us.
- ✘ And still, we focus on the next new purchase; the next promotion and raise; or the next tax loophole or “secret” to increase our monthly income; leaving us, most of the time, discontent and unsatisfied; never sure if we’ve amassed enough. And then, when we actually get to the point that we think we’ve got all that we need, we let out a sigh of relief and revel at all that we’ve accomplished.
- ✘ But in the midst of that frantic endeavor, striving to find that peace of mind and security in earthly things, we lose sight of the real picture; we forget, or don’t even realize that the Lord God; He is the provider of everything we have – both our physical and spiritual welfare. He is the One we should all be focusing on first, last and every day in between.
 - ➔ Because you see, when God is our focus, everything else falls into its rightful place. So, with that in mind, what are we to do; how are we to think, act and look at things so that we realize that there actually is a rich harvest in front of us?
- ✘ Today’s text provides good answers for us. It confirms the truth that yes, the field before us offers a harvest that is richer than any other ... as long as we never forget about God!

I. Life and Possessions All Come from God

- ✘ The Gospel Reading starts out, “Someone in the crowd said to [Jesus], ‘Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.’ But He said to him, ‘Man, who made Me a judge or arbitrator over you?’ And [Jesus] said to them, ‘Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.’ And He told them a parable, saying, ‘The land of a rich man produced plentifully’” (vv. 13–16).
 - ➔ So, what does Jesus say there is the source and purpose of this life? In verse 15 He tells us what it is not! “For one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.” Now don’t misunderstand. He didn’t say that we cannot have an abundance of possessions.
 - ➔ But throughout his Gospel, Luke does provide a critical view of those who are wealthy. And that criticism continues here in this parable. Verses 16-20, “The land of a rich man produced plentifully, and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’ And he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.’ But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’”
- ✘ So, what are you and I to do when our field – whatever our field may be – yields a rich harvest? Again, this parable is not saying we cannot have abundance. In fact, even if you were to get rid of all your possessions, that in itself would not satisfy God’s demands.

- ➔ So, the goal of this parable is not to give you a bad conscience if your life brings you a good crop or a successful increase in earthly things.
- ➔ Whether you are a farmer or in some other vocation, providing for the necessities of this earthly life is a complex venture; incorporating things like technology, education, God-given talents and tapping into a whole network of other people and organizations. So going to the extreme where you think that all you need to do is just sit back and let nature do its thing – that is not the way God designed His creation to work.
- ✖ It is good and right for us, as Christians, to thank all those other people and entities involved in bringing food to our table; shelter for our families and more. What a blessing from God that farmers, for example, provide more than just what their families need and that we are the beneficiaries of their surplus.
- ➔ So no, this text does not reject the fact that there are times when it really is necessary to tear down old and small barns in order to build bigger ones (v 18). In order to meet the needs of the population in this country and around the world, silos, cooling rooms, and larger forms of transportation are often required. Just think of Joseph, who, in his time in Egypt took a similar approach to prepare for the 7-year famine ahead and saved people's lives (Gen 41:32–36).
- ✖ Isn't this all that the man in our parable was doing; just trying to prepare for the potential strains and food-chain issues of the future?
- ➔ No: God has a specific reason why He calls this rich man a "fool" in verse 20. It's because he is living in, and depending upon a false security. Sure, he is a good businessman and manager of the resources he has. But, this man is a "fool" because his priorities are not in the right place. In fact, the one thing he's ignoring is the most important thing of all. He cares nothing for the One providing him, not only his life, but everything he has so generously received. He may be good at math and accounting but his calculation for the future is using the wrong equation. The only thing he's thinking about are his crops and dollars and reputation here on earth. So, for him, God is not a part of his life-equation.
- ✖ So God has to remind him in verse 20 who is really in charge. "This night your soul is required of you." Notice: even a good health insurance policy and preventive care plan; saving up for the future – cannot change this man's appointed hour by God. Those are certainly good things to have, the same is true for you and me, but the first, current and last item of importance for this rich man, as well as you and me, is to know that our lives are squarely in the hands of God.
- ✖ But that's not the way our world tells us we should organize our lives, is it? In verse 19 the man repeats this world's mantra, "Relax; eat, drink, be merry." That's the goal; that's the way that we have been taught to think and live here in this world.
- ➔ And don't fall for the lie and try to say, "Well, I'm not 'rich' so this text doesn't apply to me or to us here in this church." Because folks, society's dreams haven't changed from the time of our text up to this day! Every one of us still has the "it's all about me" problem, just as the rich fool showed it in the text.
- ➔ What was it he said in that internal conversation he had? "I will say to my soul, 'Soul...'" Yes, his thoughts; his plans relate to him alone; what was going to benefit him and his situation; his desires; his passions; his material circumstances. He is not looking beyond the rich yield of crops to see that someone actually exists that gave it all to him as a gift, and that's God! Does this man officially reject God or deny His existence? We don't know with certainty. But he does show how quickly and easily God can be left out of his plans and priorities.

- ✧ So, the warning here is not to think of how long we'll live or the quality of our lives only in material terms. Instead, what's crucial is that we see behind all our possessions a loving God who is deeply concerned about His creation and who provides and cares for us all.
 - ➔ The rich man is a "fool" because he doesn't see life as a gift from God. On top of that he has no expectations or thinking of a life beyond death. In other words, taking life easy, eating, drinking, and being merry in this life – these are all that matter to him. He could have taken a "full picture" perspective, where he understood and actually celebrated that these are all the wonderful activities he will one day enjoy in heaven; where his life is interconnected to God now and in eternity.
- ✧ Sure, this text describes a farming scenario, but its truths apply to every sector of industry, economy and life. In this parable what the man overlooked was how crucial God is in providing sunshine, rain, soil and growth for his vocation and life. But this holds true in whatever circumstance you and I find our lives at work, at school, or in retirement. Everything we need for this life comes from God!
 - ➔ So, the lesson to be learned is that it's not the things we have or produce that keep us alive, but that God gives us life through these goods. They are His gift to us! So, if the conversation we're having is with ourselves, then we're already going in the wrong direction. Instead, every day; all day we must be in a dialogue; a conversation with God, giving thanks and praises to Him verbally and in every aspect of our life. Once we've grasped this two-way relationship with God, that's when true contentment; true meaning fills our souls and we see that God has made us truly "rich" in heart, mind, body and soul.

II. God is Our True Purpose in Life

- ✧ Clearly things ended tragically for the rich man. Upon the man's sudden death, Jesus says in verse 21, "So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God." That's our true purpose in life, my dear people: to be truly "rich toward God."
 - ➔ But what does that mean? It could mean that we should get rid of all of our possessions; sell it all and give all that we make to the poor. Jesus even said to do this in chapter 12:33. And the Book of Acts describes the Early Christian Church following that strategy, where believers voluntarily gave up their own belongings and worked and lived only for the community of faith. Jesus even called on the rich young man in Luke 18:22 to "Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven." Yet that man couldn't; wouldn't do it and he went away sad.
- ✧ The examples are everywhere where worldly wealth comes between God and those whom He created. It's as if wealth works like an insulation sheet that stops us from turning to God. Luther said, "Whatever you set your heart on and put your trust in; that is truly your god" (LC I 3).
- ✧ But don't misunderstand what Jesus is getting at here in this parable. He's not insisting that we all must sell and/or give away everything He has given to us as a gift.
 - ➔ Instead, what he's doing is warning us against clinging to our earthly belongings with selfish and godless displays of greed. This is "not" what our lives "consist of," He says in verse 15. Jesus has been appealing to the goodwill, the love, and the freedom of all individual believers, seeking to show us that this man should be relating his life to the needs of his neighbor at the same time that he gives God the credit and glory.
 - ➔ You see, being rich toward God is to open our hearts to Him and include Him in all of our calculations for today and for our future.
- ✧ This means we take our neighbor and his/her needs seriously...sometimes even if it's on the other side of the world. Samuel Escobar, a mission expert from South America, talks about the

dramatic difference between the Northern and Southern worlds. While the South – South America, Africa and much of Asia, is spiritually vibrant right now, it is materially extremely poor. But at the same time, the North – Europe and North America – we are wealthy in material terms, but spiritually, we are at an all-time low. This culture's obsession with the evil trinity – me, myself and I – is just not the way that God created us to be where we ignore both God and those around us. You see, that's the very definition of people who are truly poor.

➔ God is very clear through the man in the parable that those who are truly rich toward God, are those who also factor in the reality that every day – yes, even today, could be the day that we die. No life insurance; not even the “perfect” life-plan is of any good if it doesn't include the existence; the reality of God and death.

✕ In medieval times there was an especially bold genre of art called *vanitas* that included somewhere in every painting a skull and an hourglass – called a *memento mori*. It was a reminder to the viewer of his/her death.

➔ This text before us today is equally blunt/bold. That which most people think should be an assurance of life – the earthly possessions, are now shown by God to be meaningless after death. As Jesus said two verses after our text, “Life is more than food, and the body more than clothing” (LK. 12:23). And in verse 20 God speaks directly to the rich man, “Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared” – think of all of the financial planning, the bigger storage barns, the savings accounts; the retirement plans – “whose will they be?”

➔ None of those things even exist without God; and certainly none of them goes with us when we stand before God at the final day of judgment and into eternity.

➔ On that day we all stand “naked” before God, stripped bare of any earthly things to hold onto or count upon for the life to come.

✕ All we have is the One of whom 2 Corinthians 8:9 says, “though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you by His poverty might become rich.” Jesus – God Himself, became poor, stripped naked, on a cross, so that you and I might be truly rich in the things that truly matter above all earthly possessions. Because of Jesus' death; because of His gift of faith, you my friends, have the eternal riches of heaven – today!

➔ To be truly rich indeed, is to be fully aware and fully content with the fact that we are entirely dependent upon God in every facet of life; that we cannot live independently; divorced from Him. Being rich in God is to trust entirely upon His undeserved mercy given to us through the death and resurrection of His Son. That, dear brothers and sisters in Jesus; that is the one and only way that we obtain and enjoy the eternal riches of perfection and paradise with God. Amen.