

Come and Listen:
Where Is Your Heart?
Luke 12:13-21

June 3, 2018

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Text Introduction: We are in a series for the summer on the Parables of Jesus. Jesus was a master story teller. People of Jesus' day were not really any different from people of today in the sense that they related to stories. Jesus took these stories using the familiar things of everyday life in the first century to capture the attention of His listeners.

When we encounter parables in the Gospels, there are a few basic interpretative principles that we must employ in order to get the real meaning of the text.

1. Understand the purpose of all parables. The literal meaning of the word parable is "to throw beside" or "to set beside." Jesus used parables to throw beside a teaching or an instructive principle. That leads us to the second consideration.
2. We must seek to understand what that principle is. "What is the main point" is the question we should be asking. Most times, if not all times, there is something in the context that reveals precisely what the main point is and the story simply illustrates that main point.
3. Because we are looking for the main point, it is also important to understand that we need not press the details of the story, but rather seek to get the main point.
4. I also want to remind us that often times we will discover the main point in the unusual detail of the story. Remember, this is the hook that would grab the attention. (And, we must do that from a first century perspective, not a twenty-first century perspective. I think that this interpretative principle is really helpful for the parable before us today.

Come and listen to the Parable of the Rich Fool.

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

14 "Friend," he said to him, "who appointed me a judge or arbitrator over you?" ¹⁵He then told them, "Watch out and be on guard against all greed, because one's life is not in the abundance of his possessions."

¹⁶Then he told them a parable: "A rich man's land was very productive. **17** He thought to himself, 'What should I do, since I don't have anywhere to store my crops? **18** I will do this,' he said. 'I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones and store all my grain and my goods there. **19** Then I'll say to myself, "You have many goods stored up for many years. Take it easy; eat, drink, and enjoy yourself.'"

20 "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life is demanded of you. And the things you have prepared—whose will they be?'

21 "That's how it is with the one who stores up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."

Introduction: In Luke 12, we read that Jesus has been teaching on the subject of eternity. Jesus has underscored that the most important question in life is the question of one's eternal destiny. The next most important question (whatever that question is) is a distant second place. The importance of this issue of our eternal destinies does not keep one from asking a question about the here and now. We see that question in verse 13. It seems that the questioner completely ignores Jesus' appeal. The question prompts Jesus' telling of a story.

Now, as we have been saying, when Jesus used a story, a parable as we call them, the story always made a point. Usually the point came before the story as it does in this text. So, it is important that we understand the point or the principle of the parable.

The Principle of the Parable

Life does not consist in the abundance of things.

That's the point. We ought to prevent attachment to our stuff here on earth, because life is not about things. Life is not about the abundance of things.

Contradictory to Popular Belief—Obviously this Biblical principle is contradictory to the opinions, attitudes, and practices of our world. Verse 13 underscores that this is true. Verse 30 underscores this in even a greater way. "For all these things the nations of the world seek after." The NIV translates this verse, "For the "pagan world runs after such things..." Notice the word "pagan" and the word "runs." That pretty much describes the attachment to material things that a lot of people have.

In Randy Alcorn's book, *The Treasure Principle*, he quotes a PBS television program called "Affluenza." The program, which exposed the modern-day plague of materialism claimed these facts:

- The Average American shops six hours a week but spends only 40 minutes playing with his or her children.
- By age 20, we have seen one million commercials.
- In a given year, more Americans declare bankruptcy than graduate from college.¹

Steven Farrar also wrote about affluenza. He said, "People drive to the mall in cars they cannot afford to spend money that they don't have, to buy things that they don't need, to impress people that they don't like."

Not Contradictory to God's Provision for us!

Still in verse 30, we read this: "And your Father knows that you need these things." Having an eternal perspective is not contradictory to our having some needs and obligations on earth. In fact, God's Word instructs us to use our money that He gives us to provide for our families, pay our bills, help the poor, and proclaim the Gospel. God knows that we need these things.

Even so, let us be careful of greed because life does not consist in the abundance of our possessions.

The Parable

¹ Randy Alcorn, *The Treasure Principle*, p. 58, Lifeway, 2006.

To illustrate the principle, Jesus told a story. The parable illustrates what happens when we make the emphasis of our life the acquisition of stuff.

- Selfish Greed—Wealth in the first century was rare. The land owners had all the wealth. Storing in the first century was almost unheard of. The key to understanding this parable is that this man had incredible, incomprehensible wealth. But even in all this wealth, he still wanted more so that he could store more.
- Selfish Glory—There is a definite emphasis on selfish thinking in this parable. Someone remarked about this man, “He never saw beyond himself.”²
- Selfish Goal—Finally, this man had a selfish goal. His goal was to lay up his goods so that he could take his ease, eat, drink, and be merry. This is a selfish goal.

Take Home Points from the Parable

And so some ask, “O.K., pastor, what do we do?” Jesus actually answered the question for us.

Don't be pre-occupied with the things of this world.

Luke 12:22 says, “Then He said to His disciples, ‘Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on.’” And Luke 12:29 says, “And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind.”

But rather....

Be Persistent in Seeking the Kingdom of God.

Luke 12:31 says, “But seek the kingdom of God and all these things shall be added to you.”

George Washington Truett was the pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas for 47 years (1897-1944). The story is told of how he once visited a wealthy West Texas rancher to have dinner. After dinner the rancher took the preacher out on the balcony of his mansion. The man pointed to the South toward some oil rigs and said, “I own everything in that direction as far as you can see.” He pointed east toward some cotton fields and said, “And I own all of those fields.” He pointed toward the North to a huge herd of cattle. You guessed it—he bragged of how he owned all the cattle. He turned toward the west and said, “I own all in that direction except the sun.”

The story goes that Dr. Truett said to the man as he pointed to the sky, “And how much do you own in that direction?”

We ought to ask ourselves that same question today, for that is the only thing that matters.

And protect your heart.

Right before this concluding word, there is a word that seems almost out of place. It is that word in verse 32 to not fear. But, that encouragement is not out of place at all. Jesus knew that to seek His

² John Barclay, *Daily Bible Study Series*.

kingdom first would cause a great many of us to fear. Don't fear; go for it! Decide that you are finished with making the things of this world your first priority. Seek His Kingdom first.

And, then in verse 34, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." This is the exclamation point on the earlier appeal, "Watch out and be on guard against all greed." What are we to guard? We are to guard our hearts.

Missionary David Livingstone did. Livingstone was a missionary first to China and then to Africa. He spent 30 years in Africa. He believed it was his mission to pave the way for other missionaries to go to Africa. He stayed through great hardship. Upon his death, some of his close associates cut out his heart and buried it in Africa before returning his body to be buried in Westminster Abbey. Fitting, I think, for someone who gave his heart for Africa to have his heart buried in Africa.

If you died today, where would be the most appropriate place for your loved ones to bury your heart?