

LUKE 12:13–21. (EHV)

Someone from the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” But Jesus said to him, “Man, who appointed me to be a judge or an arbitrator over you?” Then he said to them, “Watch out and be on guard against all greed, because a man’s life is not measured by how many possessions he has.” He told them a parable: “The land of a certain rich man produced very well. He was thinking to himself, ‘What will I do, because I do not have anywhere to store my crops?’ He said, ‘This is what I will do. I will pull down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and goods. And I will tell my soul, ‘Soul, you have many goods stored up for many years. Take it easy. Eat, drink, and be merry.’” But God said to him, ‘You fool, this night your soul will be demanded from you. Now who will get what you have prepared?’ That is how it will be for anyone who stores up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”

Brothers and sisters in Christ:

“Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die.” This is a well-known saying that is thousands of years old. People think this because life is short. You will hear, “Don’t worry about it. Buy whatever you want. Nothing really matters. Enjoy the things on earth.” The treasure here on earth seems great. There is nothing wrong with enjoying life, but there is more to life. There is nothing wrong with having things, as long as we keep in mind what is *the most important thing*. Jesus speaks directly to us by telling a parable about a rich fool. And his message could not be more clear: **Be on guard against greed—by appropriately valuing earthly wealth, and by properly prioritizing heavenly treasure.**

1. Appropriately value earthly wealth

Our text begins with Jesus speaking to a large crowd. Thousands of people are listening to what Jesus has to say. One person speaks out from the crowd and asks, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” The brother wants Jesus to tell his older brother to divide the inheritance with him.

Jesus responded to him asking him, “Who appointed me to be a judge or an arbitrator over you?” Jesus’ response seems harsh, but back in that time period people would come up to rabbis to help settle a dispute like this one over inheritance.

Jesus then responds with this general word of warning: “Watch out and be on guard against all greed.” There is nothing wrong with having lots of possessions. We can have nice cars, cell phones, good food to eat. God blesses us with many things in life that we can have here on earth that bring us joy! Jesus warns us, though, not to make our life all about these things because that is not what life here on earth is about.

Jesus continues on with a parable about a rich man who had a problem. Specifically, this rich man had a God-given “problem” of too many crops. He had too much food and nowhere to store it. He did not want these crops to go to waste. He thought to himself about this problem, but do you notice that he did not pray to God for help. He thought to himself about the problem and thought that he could solve it on his own.

The solution he comes up with is this: “I will pull down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and goods.” This is the perfect solution. “I will have plenty of grain stored up for many years. I can take life easy; I can eat, drink and be merry. I can relax and have no worries. Nothing is going to happen to me. There is no way that this plan can fail.” The rich man’s plan is “I will do this, I will do that, and it will work. I don’t need to consult anyone about this plan.” ...

The rich man led a sad and lonely existence, but he has plenty of people around him, doesn’t he? Sometimes do we do the same thing today. We become secure in things that we have, and we forget that God is the one who gives us these things. Don’t get me wrong, there is nothing wrong with enjoying the things we have here on earth. The problem is that we sometimes give the possessions that we have a value they do not have and a role on earth that they were never meant to fill.

For the rich man it was all about him and what *he* needed to do. We do the same thing; we make our lives all about us. We have a problem with our possessions, and we come up with our own solutions. We don’t always consult God first. We end having the wrong attitude when it comes to the things we own. We can get too comfortable with our lives here on earth and think only about ourselves and not about God.

Things on earth have value, but they are just things. They don’t last forever, and they don’t begin to compare with what God promises us in his word. So properly prioritize that value. God wants us to understand the value of all stuff is limited. And even more important than that, God wants us to prioritize heavenly treasure.

2. Properly prioritize heavenly treasure

Most people would call the rich man successful, even a good steward of God’s gifts, but what did God call him? A fool! God tells the rich man, “This night your soul will be demanded from you. Now who will get what you have prepared?” “You are going to die tonight. Your possessions are now useless. All that time you spent storing up grain so that you could take life easy, all that time was now wasted.” The rich man had put all his trust in his possessions...and in an instant it was gone.

Jesus brings his parable to a close with these strong words: “That is how it will be for anyone who stores up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.” Being rich towards God can sound weird, but it means putting God first. Being rich toward God means that God is our most precious possession. Being rich toward is another way of saying that God wants us to prioritize our heavenly treasure. Trust in God to provide for yourself. Consult with God through prayer and ask him that his will be done.

As good as the treasure here on earth seems, there is a greater treasure for us in heaven. This heavenly treasure is greater than earthly treasure because it is not temporary. Earthly treasure lasts for a while. The things you have here on earth will fade away, but the treasure we have in heaven will last forever. In heaven we don’t have to worry about worrying about what tomorrow may bring. It will be an awesome thing to be in heaven with our Savior Jesus.

Being rich toward God begins and ends with Jesus. Rich toward God is what we are because of Jesus. Rich toward God is what we are because, by God’s grace, we don’t have to put our trust in things here on earth, but in Jesus! Paul writes the same amazing truth in similar

words: “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich” (2 Cor. 8:9). That is the best treasure we could ask for. We don’t have to do anything. We don’t have to come up with our own solutions because Jesus did everything for us. The greatest treasure here on earth is not nearly as valuable as the treasure we have waiting for us in heaven.

That is maybe why we don’t ask to be buried with all of our most prized possessions like an Egyptian. When an Egyptian ruler died, they would be burying them with their possessions, sometimes even their pets. They wanted to hold on to the things they had here on earth. They could not bring those things with them no matter what they did. We can’t bring these possessions with us either. And that is just fine.

So what, if we lose everything we own? That is not the end of the world. God will provide for us; we do not have to worry. He provided for his people in the past, he provides for us now in the present and will provide for us in the future. God wants us to enjoy the things we have here on earth, and he wants us to look forward to the treasure that awaits us in heaven where we will have *everything*, because we will be with Jesus.

“Eat, drink and be merry.” Christians can do this. We can enjoy the things we have here on earth. The reality is that tomorrow we may die, and that is okay. Jesus tells us to be on guard against greed. We do this by appropriately valuing earthly wealth, and by properly prioritizing heavenly treasure. When we prioritize our treasure in heaven over everything here on earth, we don’t have to be afraid of dying. We know what awaits us in heaven. It will be wonderful to be in heaven with our Savior. Amen!