

Luke 12: 13-21; Psalm 49:5-9; A Poor Rich Fool I. Jesus' Reluctance II. Jesus' Rebuke

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, as we continue our series we find a revealing outburst this morning. As Jesus has been warning the crowds about the Pharisees- their hypocrisy and love of money- up walks a man with a question that seems to be out of the blue. Jesus has warned them- don't fear man, rather fear God because God knows and controls all things. And the comfort we Christians have because the Holy Spirit teaches us, leading us into all truth. This Spirit remains even when we are persecuted- even when we lose everything in this world. And then like a shot in the dark- this guy comes to Jesus with a complaint! This revealing outburst shows what this man has been thinking about the whole time. It would be like a person standing up right now- in the middle of the sermon and saying- stop everything- I lost my wallet! Everyone look for it right now! I need my credit cards and cash! Well- something more important was going on and this guy missed it- the teaching of Jesus concerning the coming judgement and the need to be ready has been completely missed! Into this context of selfishness that Jesus rebukes the coveting generation of men with His parable of the rich fool.

I. Jesus' Reluctance

Our passage opens by revealing Jesus' reluctance. This unidentified man shows up and starts making demands of Jesus- a bold thing to do to say the least. In this Jewish context, the older or firstborn brother would be the one who would get the inheritance after the father died. The firstborn would receive a double portion- and it was his responsibility to distribute the assets as required. Perhaps this man was annoyed by the timing- or the amount he received- so he comes to Jesus to solve this dispute. But Jesus is more concerned about this man's attitude than He is about solving this dispute. Jesus responds- man, who made me your lawyer. This man wanted Jesus to be a gun for hire- he wanted to use Jesus' position in order to get what he wanted. Jesus refers to him as "man." Not brother or friend- but man- a stranger. Jesus did not come to negotiate a better deal- His purpose on earth to settle family squabbles. Nor did Jesus come to make us healthy and wealthy for that matter. It would be like a man

commenting on the stock market when you are reading the Bible. Asking for your input on today's losses when you are trying to teach your children the gospel. Now money can cause untold family strife. Even the settling of assets and trusts after someone dies. But this man's focus is on wealth- his desire is greed! He wanted to get a better deal- and Jesus was just a tool to get it! Jesus refuses to get involved in this because it was distracting from Jesus' mission. Just as Moses would be worn out by the constant flow of people- if Jesus started settling disputes like this they would never end! This brings up a question- should the church be involved in legal affairs? In I Cor. 6 the church is presented as a place of wisdom- shouldn't we be wise enough to settle accounts and disagreements within the church so that we need not go to the state and courts of men? Wise elders should be able to settle disagreements between two brothers and give shrewd counsel among the brothers. But this man is not a disciple of Jesus- there is no spiritual life that Jesus can appeal to. His mind is firmly rooted on things below. It would be like the church taking the place of the courts in the public judicial system- which would only hinder its work of preaching and works of mercy. So Jesus is not going to be used- He will not enable this man's greed. The heart issue here is the issue of greed- an idolatrous wanting. Greed desires more than God has provided- a constant craving that is never satisfied. Like drinking salt water while adrift on the sea- the more you take in the more you thirst for more- and eventually it is that constant thirst that will destroy your soul.

II. Jesus' Rebuke

So Jesus continues with a warning a rebuke. The warning is found in v. 15- a two-fold caution. Watch out- "orao" – be on the lookout for. And beware- philasso in the Greek- keep on guard so that you are kept from. Be on the look on and stand fast against. Well- what is so dangerous? Covetousness. To covet is to have a greedy desire for more- dealing with the 8th and the 10th commandment. Wanton eyes that are never filled- the leach called "give, give." Jesus is more concerned about this man's desires- about the state of his heart than He is about making sure this man gets what he supposedly deserves. Dividing up the money is not going to help- in fact it will make it worse! This man would have gone away

rich- but still very poor towards God. He would have become rich towards himself as v. 21 says- while God would see him as truly poor. In order to confront this man's sin- to rebuke his greed- Jesus tells a parable. Isn't it interesting that Jesus refuses to answer the surface questions- instead choosing to get to the heart of the matter! In the parable that follows- we have a rich man who has a great harvest. The barns cannot hold the increase, so he builds bigger ones. He says to himself in v. 19- self- sit back and take it easy. Eat, drink and be merry. But he forgets how this verse from Proverbs 23 ends- eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die! This man forgot- neglecting the fact that he would in this very night die! He has no worries while alive- take life easy! Like our world says- live life for today- take it easy, retire early. I can rest and relax my life away! I am free from troubles. In all this his thinking was selfish and self-centered. He keeps all for himself- not selling, sharing or giving anything away. He said to his own soul- now I will do this and I will do that. Notice his big plans- how the great I of man is central here. The word "I" occurs 8 times in the Greek in v. 17-19! Yet- he did not account for the one in whose hands his life remained. He neglected the wisdom of James 4- we should say if it is God's will! In the night his life was taken into account- he had to give a reckoning of his actions in v. 20. God weighed his life and found it wanting- he was rich in worldly things but poor towards God. Now what does it mean to be poor towards God? To be a poor fool is to hate wisdom. This fool did not trust in God, did not thank God when the blessings came, and basically gave no consideration of God! He did not consider godliness- had no place for considering his own mortality. He also failed to do good with the things God gave him. All of these sins spring from an idolatrous- covetous heart. The issue is this- how did this man view his possessions? They were mine- and my happiness is bound up in them. The point of life was pleasure and increase! As Mark Twain said- the chief end of man is to get rich. Whoever dies with the most toys wins- right? Don't think about what comes next. Well- in the end this man was poor. Not only did he lose every earthly trinket- his own soul was bankrupt! His money would not pay for his life as we read in Psalm 49- no payment to ransom his soul. Thus he was truly bankrupt! This is the thinking of our world

today, isn't it! We are defined by the car we drive- the vacation we can afford- the cloths we wear! Our identity is linked to the balance sheet at the bank. But that is not what life is about! As v. 15 concludes- your life does not consist in the abundance of things! In amassing wealth- there is no end! Rather, we need to be rich towards God! Or in other words- to be rich in God's sight! Well- what does it mean to be rich in God's sight? To be rich in God's sight is to have a righteousness that pays for your soul! It is to be right with God- and heir to life everlasting! That is true riches- a ransomed soul which is worth more than all the gold and silver of this world as I Peter 1 says. The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever- the purpose of life is to love and serve God- to honor God and be a blessing to those around us! The fact is- greed gets us off course! Like trying to follow your GPS in a parking garage- you get no signal and you end up waking in circles. Greed confuses us- we put emphasis on things that are temporary and passing- while neglecting things that are permanent and lasting! We hold on to what we cannot keep while shunning that which cannot be lost! That is what greed does- it is the thorns of life that choke the seed and stunt any spiritual growth! True riches are the ones that we receive in Jesus Christ- life, a heavenly home, resurrected bodies! These are the things that last! What good does it do you if you gain the whole world, but you lose your soul? Jesus came to bring us to God- to make us truly rich, not to give us a few trinkets that last only for a moment! So take heed- watch out for covetousness! Guard yourself from and keep your eyes peeled for greed! Have wise suspicion of wealth- knowing that loving it leads to all sorts of sins- which blind you towards the reality and purpose of life!

To conclude, it is foolish to settle for anything less than true riches- being richly blessed in God's sight! Jesus rebukes the coveting generation of men with His parable of the rich fool. So watch out for greed and covetousness- rather seek to be godly and content! For life is about more than amassing things- life is about loving God and man from a thankful heart!