

The parable of the Rich Fool

17th July 25



Passage for Consideration:

16-21: And he spoke a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my

soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

This is another parable where Jesus explains the meaning to us.

Context:

Earlier in the chapter Jesus was warning his disciples about imminent persecution, and also giving them advice how they could cope. God sees, our Father in heaven knows, He shows more grace, do not worry, as all these things are in His hands, and the outcome, will be according to His will is the essential message:

7 But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.

Jesus advises: 11,12 *And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take no thought how or what thing you shall answer, or what you shall say: For the Holy Spirit shall teach you in the same hour what you ought to say.*

This is not to say that the Holy Spirit operates in the same way today, but Jesus was explaining, that with the trial, a way of escape or a way to bear the trial would be made possible, - and this principle still applies today. Therefore it follows that in all of our affairs, there is no need to get all concerned and over wrought about things which are outside of our control.

While Jesus was talking to his disciples, someone in the company seeking to take advantage of this obviously wise and influential man speaking in their midst, and use him to solve a problem he had been worrying about. This incident immediately served to illustrate exactly what Jesus had been talking about.

13 *And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.*

The Lord Jesus declined to get involved in the wrangle, and did not answer him further, but answered them. That is, everyone there in the crowd, disciples, listeners, and the curious.

15 *And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses.*

Here Jesus makes two points. He did not directly address the matter of the inheritance, as everyone was well aware that under the law of Moses, the man was entitled to his inheritance as much as his brother and the man could take the matter to the priests who would pass a ruling. The first point he made was that all there should beware of the lust of covetousness, and the second, of the great delusion that materialism is somehow the point and reason of life.

This is a theme Jesus returns to in many of his teachings. For example in:

Luke 8:14 his parable of the sower, he warns of one of the setbacks/obstacles to the good seed is: *And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.* Again in Luke 21:34: *And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.*

Jesus recognised this very big danger to the hearts of men and women, of the importance they attach to possessions, and to material things, the more they have the more they want, and that this is often driven by covetousness. So these possessions become the cares of this life, the riches and pleasures of this life. Having belongings is not a problem, as long as they don't rule your life. Having pleasure is a good thing, as it is a blessing designed and given by God, as long as those pleasures do not become the aim of the life

The Parable:

Verse 16: ... The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: We note the way Jesus words this carefully. It wasn't the efforts of the rich man, which gave a plentiful increase. It wasn't what he did, but what the ground did. The dirt and dust from which we are all made. It is what God permitted. The same soil that all walk upon. It just so happened that the portion of land this rich man "owned" was fertile. Ecclesiastes 9:11: *I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happens to them all.* Jesus pointed out that the rain falls on the just and the unjust (Matthew 5:45) and therefore Jesus in the choice of the wording is

making sure that no one is led to believe that the rich man deserves any credit for the riches he has accrued.

Verse 17: *And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?*

However, this rich man, thought otherwise. He thought he deserved all the credit, he had done it all, it was all down to him. We recall someone else like that... Daniel 4: 29,30 *At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. The king spoke, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?* Yes, Nebuchadnezzar. He took all the credit to himself and revelled in all his possessions. That very night, all those riches amounted to nothing, and he was ejected from the palace, because he was drooling and foaming at the mouth and rampaging around like a mad bull.

In this parable the rich man is doing plenty of thinking, but not positively towards others. He considers all the fruit of the ground to be his fruits. What shall I do? He ponders. Anxiety builds... where do I put them? They can't just stay where they are, they need to be kept safe, they will be taken by other people. He thought hard, and looked at his existing barns, and could clearly see they were simply too small for such bumper crops.

Verse 18 *And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.* Such a dramatic conclusion, to actually tear down his existing storage facilities, and rebuild bigger ones, was a serious commitment, which would have needed a lot of investment and involved risk as well. The profit from the additional produce would be seriously reduced by this ridiculous solution. We notice he does not consider at all other solutions. Did not consider giving a bonus to his workers. Did not think about giving gifts to relatives, nor did it even cross his mind to

give a gift to the Priests in the Temple, as a thankyou to God of heaven who had so blessed him.

Instead, we see the continual use of the word 'I' in verses 17-19. Six times. Six the number of man. (Rev 13:18) Me, me, me,....

Verse 19: And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

This rich man, is convinced in his own wisdom, that he was solely responsible for his success and destiny. To him, these possessions were not to be shared, but for his own security, his insurance policy.

But what says the Scripture:

Psalms 62:10: Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery: if riches increase, set not your heart upon them.

Proverbs 23:4-5: Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.

Verse 20: But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

There was old Belshazzar just like his predecessor, who loved boasting about all his achievements, and gathered all his acolytes together in a grand hall, to celebrate all his possessions, even using the stolen hallowed treasures of the Temple to drink his dodgy Persian liquor from... inebriated and puffed with boasting, he was cut down by the finger of God, and was dead by the next morning.
(Daniel 5:1-6)

1Timothy 6:7-10: For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of

all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

This rich man in Jesus parable, represented the upper classes of the Jewish nation at the time of Jesus. Bloated with their self-congratulations, and overweening confidence they neatly and precisely fulfilled the warnings described in detail in Deuteronomy 6:11-12, and 8: 12-14, where the nation would take full credit for its own success, and live by the blessings of God, as if they were down to their own amazing abilities, and the sense of entitlement just brought about their own utter self destruction.

Verse 21: So is he that lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

The lesson is clear, and relevant to all. There is nothing wrong with planning for the future, and making sensible precautions, ensuring the blessings that God has given us are looked after and not wasted and squandered, so that precious time and energy can then be devoted to the things to do with the Gospel. But making the security of our possessions an end in themselves, and worshipping possessions as an idol, being never satisfied, is the peril which the Lord Jesus identifies, and sees that so many are guilty of. The Apostle says: Hebrews 13:5: *Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*

It is far better to keep our life as simple and straightforward as possible with the least amount of distractions, the more we have the more we have to worry about. Ecclesiastes 4:6: *Better is an handful with quietness, than both the hands full with travail and vexation of spirit.*

Brother Terry