

Luke 12:13-21/Pentecost 8/Proper 13/4 August 2019

Central Thought: Earthly possessions or God, which is more important to you?

Goal: With the help of the Holy Spirit bring the people to knowledge of their sin and depravity. Bring them to salvation by causing the people to repent of their sin and turn from unrighteous.

Malady: Sinful humans are self centered; therefore, the treasure they seek and store up is entirely for self versus for others.

Means: Proclaim God blesses us that we may bless others. Proclaim we must choose between God and self. Living according to God's Word brings eternal blessings. Living according to self brings temporal blessings that expire rapidly.

Theme: He who lays up treasure for self is not rich toward God.

Introduction:

Saints in Christ, redeemed from all sin, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with Christ's holy, precious blood, and with his innocent suffering and death: Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ. The Inspired Word of God comes to us today from the Gospel according to Saint Luke CH 12.

How often do you misplace priorities and values? How often do you lie to God, to others, to yourself? Take out the mirror of God's Law and examine your life. How often and in what ways do you hide the truth? For example, if you ask someone, "What is more important, your family or your job?" most individuals will, without hesitation, reply: "Family." But the truth is, most people work harder at their jobs, care more about their jobs, spend more time at work and with coworkers, and derive greater pride from their jobs than they do their families. Examining your life, which is more important? Let us look at what else consumes our time. For you, what is a higher priority, reading the Bible or watching TV? Although most religious people will say: "Reading the Bible is more important," that's probably not where they put their time. Again, look at your life. During the past week where did you spend more time, learning from God's Word or learning from secular programming?

Now that you have an idea of where you commit most of your time, I ask, "What is more important, your soul or your material wealth?" Certainly most of you said your soul, your spiritual well being. My next question is, during the past days how much time did you spend thinking about, working on, caring for your temporal possessions versus thinking about where you will spend eternity? We deceive ourselves about the importance of money, earthy possessions, and activities. Jesus said lying about our priorities is a dangerous human habit.

Sadly, many humans habitually lie to themselves. That is the point Jesus tried to make to a person in the account recorded in the 12th chapter of the Gospel of Luke. The chapter begins with the Savior speaking to His followers about hypocrisy, hell, and how to be a witnessing disciple. That's when somebody from the crowd called out a demand. He said, "Teacher, get my brother to divide my inheritance with me." It sounds like a reasonable appeal, doesn't it? Of course it does. But let me ask: did you hear, in anything the man said, any expression of grief, any bit of mourning at the death of his parents? Did you hear him

ask about their eternal destinies, or how he might be certain of his eternal destiny? Did you hear the man express any concern of how the sad news of their parents' passing affected his brother? None of those thoughts, those feelings were there. They're not there because the man was sick. The man contracted a terminal case of **influenza**. His heart and mind were centered on, controlled and commanded by, a desire to get his share of the inheritance he felt was coming to him. Indeed, he probably wanted more than the money and items which the law said he was entitled to. The man wanted Jesus to order the immediate distribution of the inheritance. (Instant gratification)

Jesus replied with the parable of the rich fool. The main character of the story is called a "fool" not because he was ignorant. Indeed, he succeeded monetarily through a number of shrewd moves.

A first-rate farmer, the man bought the right seed and planted it at the right moment. He fertilized when the fields needed to be fertilized. The man sold his crop when the market was at its highest and bought land when it was at its lowest. The man was good at what he did. Due to his success he became quite well off materialistically.

Sure, God blessed the crop with sufficient rain and a suitable number of sunny days. But he didn't concern himself about those variables. The man's confidence was in himself, his wisdom, his consistent and successful accomplishments, the money he managed to accumulate, the crops stored in his barns. Confident in himself, the man thought of no reason things would ever be different. But, at least according to the story Jesus told, things changed. The year finally came when the man wasn't going to bring in a good crop. Instead, God blessed him with a bumper crop, the once-in-a-lifetime crop that other farmers only dreamed of.

Doing some mental calculations, the first-class farmer realized the potential crop was greater than his present storage capacity. Being the shrewd businessman that he was, the farmer said something like this: "I'm going to tear down my small barns and build bigger barns to store all my grain. Then, when everything is done, I'm going to say to myself, 'Congratulations, self! You have all the wealth you're ever going to need. It's time to kick back, relax, eat, drink, and be merry.'"

If this was a made-up fairytale the man's story would end with the words "He lived happily ever after." In all honesty, he lived the rest of his life happily. Jesus finished the parable with a warning. God said to the first-rate farmer: Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you prepared, whose will they be? The man wasn't a fool because he was smart or because he was rich. He was a fool because he thought being smart, making money, and acquisition of material items was the beginning, middle, and end of life. It all sounds great until death shuts it down. That night God ended the man's temporal life and separated him eternally from God. The man loved the world more than God.

Of course, you might say, "*Pastor, that's a story, a parable. You and I both know things don't actually happen that way.*" Recall the city of Pompeii Italy. Some of you visited that city. Recall it was suddenly destroyed by the eruption of a volcano. As far as we know all the inhabitants died; buried alive by volcanic ash. Several years ago construction workers were laying a foundation for a building outside the ancient city of Pompeii. There they found the corpse of a woman who appeared to have been overcome by the rain of ash which fell from the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 79 AD. In the woman's skeletal hands were jewels, perfectly preserved gems. She still held on to the jewels when death grabbed hold of her. Her wealth didn't save her.

Someday you will leave everything behind, your money, your possessions, and the very body you now live in. That is why Jesus wants you to know that having money and stuff is OK as long as it doesn't displace God from your heart. There is nothing wrong with material wealth. But don't think that being physically rich is a suitable substitute for being spiritually rich in your relationship with the only Savior of humankind, Jesus. Don't delude yourself into thinking that whatever you accumulate here will be with you in heaven or hell. Don't lie to yourself as did the rich fool.

(LAW) Love of anything which displaces God, which overshadows the Savior; which overpowers His grace, which overrides His plans and His life-giving intentions for you, is the root, trunk, branches, and leaves of all evil.

This Lord's Day the Holy Spirit calls you away from the sinful folly of following money, anything which says it can substitute, supplant, and supersede the Savior; from any lifestyle which says God is deserving of your leftovers. Today the Holy Spirit encourages you to look at Bethlehem's lowly manger, Calvary's bloodied cross, and the Savior's empty grave.

(GOSPEL) Behold and believe in God's Son who took your place under the law so you might have a place in heaven; who resisted Satan's temptations so you might be given Divine redemption; who died so you might live; who lives so you might never die. Today we RX eschatological bread: absolution, God's Word, baptism, and the Lord's Supper – a foretaste of the feast to come. By the Holy Spirit's power be given faith in Jesus Christ, God's great Gift, Your gracious Redeemer. This is the truth of Scripture. That is the message of the Bible. Having Jesus as your Savior, as your Redeemer, is real riches indeed. Amen.