

THE PARABLE OF THE RICH FOOL: THE MAN OF WEALTH AND WHAT HE SHOULD FEAR LUKE 12:13–21

Introduction

The man of wealth is often self-sufficient, but there are some things he needs to fear.

- I. A request for Jesus to give a judicial decision (vv. 13-14).
- II. Fear this: life does not consist in things (vv. 15-19).
- III. Fear this: your life may be required and demanded tonight (v. 20).
- IV. Fear this: wealth is not a permanent possession — someone else gets it (vv. 20-21).

I. *Luke 12:13–14 Worldliness and Materialism*

There was a request for Jesus to give a judicial decision. A man was having a dispute with his brother over the inheritance of his father's estate. The law gave two-thirds to the older son and one third to the younger son. The man felt he was not getting his legal share, so he appealed to Jesus for help in getting his share. It was a common practice for Rabbis or Teachers to settle legal disputes. Note five things.

1. The man was in the congregation listening to Jesus preach. There is a strong possibility that the man was even a follower of Jesus. This is seen in that Jesus had apparently paused for a brief rest between sermons, and the man knew Jesus well enough to approach Him about the matter in the midst of a huge crowd.
2. What the man wanted was significant. He wanted material wealth, money, and property. Note: he appealed to Jesus for help in getting what had probably been stolen from him. More than likely the property was rightfully his anyway. It would have been an act of justice to straighten out the inheritance.
3. Jesus refused rather sternly. He forcefully addressed the man as a stranger: "Man." He treats the man as one who is alien to the Lord and His purpose on earth. Jesus refused to become involved in worldly affairs, in settling property and money disputes.
4. The man exposed a serious flaw in his spiritual life. Jesus had just preached a message on trusting God for the necessities of life, for God cares and will provide. Apparently, the man had not heard the message. He was bodily present, but he was too preoccupied with the thoughts of property and money to really hear the Word and receive the message.

Thought 1. Listening to the Word being preached does not mean that we "hear the Word," nor that we learn from it. The Word, salvation, and spiritual maturity do not rub off on a wandering mind or on a worldly life.

5. The contrast between the mind and attitude of the man and of Jesus is significant. The man's mind was set on the things of the earth and the world, on property and money, wealth and selfishness. The Lord's mind was set on the higher and more noble, on salvation and life, on heaven and eternity. The mission of Jesus was not to give man property, but to give man life, both abundant and eternal. Property is nothing without life.

II. *Luke 12:15–19 Fear: Worldliness, Selfishness and Indulgence*

Fear — life does not consist in things. Note four points.

1. The charge of Jesus was strong. There was a double warning: “Watch out! Be on your guard.” The warning was to be given close attention. The words be on your guard (phulassesthe) means to beware, to guard oneself from some enemy.
2. The big sin of man is greed or covetousness (See *Greed, Covetousness*, Lk. 12:15; *Lust, Desire*, Jas. 4:1-3). This is the big sin of the world — desiring more and more. However, a man's happiness and comfort, soul and body do not depend upon what he has; many poor people are happy and comfortable with healthy souls and bodies. Life does not consist in possessions — a beautiful home, the latest clothes, a new car, property, money, wealth.
3. The big “I” shows that the greedy man is aggressively self-centred. Note how Jesus gets the fact of man's greed across. He shares a parable about a man who was also aggressively self-centred. In just three short verses describing his thoughts, the rich man in the parable said, “I” six times and “my” five times. The man's attention was solely upon himself. Now note the parable.
 - a. The man was blessed materially, tremendously blessed, but he did not thank God for his blessing.
 - b. The man called the fruits of the ground and the possessions he had, “my crops” and “my goods” (vv. 17-18).
 - c. The man said that he had plenty of good things, that he could take life easy, eat drink and be merry. There is no indication he had given his soul to God.
 - d. He became puffed up, prideful with what he had done. He began to think of bigger and bigger, of I and I, of my and my.
4. The big mistake of man is selfishness, self-indulgence, and extravagant living (See *Sin*, Lk. 16:19-21). Note the sole purpose of man is to be at ease, to have plenty to eat and drink, and to enjoy life as he wishes. Note several facts about the man in the parable.
 - a. He thought only of self, of living at ease and in comfort, of indulging self and being as extravagant as he wished. He gave no thought to helping others. He forgot that he lived in a needy world that was lost and dying.

- b. He put off living and enjoying life until he got his barns built. The idea is that he was a workaholic, who was consumed with the passion to get what he wanted. (How many are just like him when they want something!)
- c. Now note the most shocking point: he only thought these things. He never did them; they were only thoughts of his heart.

***Deu 8:11-14** Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.*

***Prov 11:24** One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty.*

***Prov 21:13** If a man shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, he too will cry out and not be answered.*

***Prov 24:11-12** Rescue those being led away to death; hold back those staggering toward slaughter. If you say, "But we knew nothing about this," does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who guards your life know it? Will he not repay each person according to what he has done?*

***Prov 28:27** He who gives to the poor will lack nothing, but he who closes his eyes to them receives many curses.*

***Isa 5:8** Woe to you who add house to house and join field to field till no space is left and you live alone in the land.*

***Eccl 5:13** I have seen a grievous evil under the sun: wealth hoarded to the harm of its owner.*

***Zec 7:6** And when you were eating and drinking, were you not just feasting for yourselves?*

***Mat 19:23** Then Jesus said to his disciples, "I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven."*

***Mat 25:42-43** 'For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'*

***Mark 4:19** "But the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful."*

***1 Tim 6:9** People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction.*

1 John 3:17 *If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?*

LUKE 12: 15 GREED, COVETOUSNESS (PLEONEXIA)

Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

Luke 12:15

A craving, a desire for more. It is greediness, a dissatisfaction with what is enough. It includes the cravings for both material things and fleshly indulgence. It is desiring what belongs to others; snatching at something that belongs to others; a love of having, a cry of give me, give me (see 2 Pet. 2:14).

=> It is a lust so deep within a man that he finds his happiness in things instead of in God.

=> It is a greed or covetousness so deep that it desires the power that things bring more than the things themselves.

=> It is an intense appetite for gain; a passion for the pleasure that things can bring. It goes beyond the pleasure of possessing things for their own sakes.

Mat 6:19-21 *"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."*

Mat 6:24 *"No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."*

Mat 16:26 *"What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?"*

Eph 5:3, 5 *But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person — such a man is an idolater — has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.*

Col 3:5-6 *Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.*

Phil 3:18-19 For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things.

1 Tim 3:2-3 Now the overseer [minister] must be above reproach....not a lover of money. (see Tit 1:7)

1 Tim 6:7-10 For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

1 Tim 6:17 Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

2 Tim 3:2 People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy.

Heb 13:5 Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

James 4:2-3 You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

James 5:01-03 Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you. Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. (see v.4-6)

1 Pet 5:02 Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers — not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve.

2 Pet 2:3 In their greed these [false] teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.

2 Pet 2:14 [False teachers] With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning; they seduce the unstable; they are experts in greed — an accursed brood!

Exo 20:17 “You shall not covet your neighbour’s house. You shall not covet your neighbour’s wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour.”

Job 31:24-25, 28 “If I have put my trust in gold or said to pure gold, ‘You are my security,’ if I have rejoiced over my great wealth, the fortune my hands had gained, then these also would be sins to be judged, for I would have been unfaithful to God on high.”

Psa 10:3 He boasts of the cravings of his heart; he blesses the greedy and reviles the Lord.

Psa 62:10 Do not trust in extortion or take pride in stolen goods; though your riches increase, do not set your heart on them.

Psa 119:36 Turn my heart toward your statutes and not toward selfish gain.

Prov 15:27 A greedy man brings trouble to his family, but he who hates bribes will live.

Prov 21:25-26 The sluggard’s craving will be the death of him, because his hands refuse to work. All day long he craves for more, but the righteous give without sparing.

Prov 22:16 He who oppresses the poor to increase his wealth and he who gives gifts to the rich - both come to poverty.

Prov 23:4-5 Do not wear yourself out to get rich; have the wisdom to show restraint. Cast but a glance at riches, and they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle.

Prov 27:24 For riches do not endure forever, and a crown is not secure for all generations.

Prov 28:10 He who leads the upright along an evil path will fall into his own trap, but the blameless will receive a good inheritance.

Prov 28:20 A faithful man will be richly blessed, but one eager to get rich will not go unpunished.

Prov 30:8 Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread.

Eccl 5:10 Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless.

Isa 1:23 *Your rulers are rebels, companions of thieves; they all love bribes and chase after gifts. They do not defend the cause of the fatherless; the widow's case does not come before them.*

Isa 56:11 *They are dogs with mighty appetites; they never have enough. They are shepherds who lack understanding; they all turn to their own way, each seeks his own gain.*

Isa 57:17 *I was enraged by his sinful greed; I punished him, and hid my face in anger, yet he kept on in his wilful ways.*

Jer 6:13 *“From the least to the greatest, all are greedy for gain; prophets and priests alike, all practice deceit.” (see Jer 8:10)*

Jer 22:17 *“But your eyes and your heart are set only on dishonest gain, on shedding innocent blood and on oppression and extortion.”*

Jer 51:13 *You who live by many waters and are rich in treasures, your end has come, the time for you to be cut off.*

Ezek 22:12 *In you men accept bribes to shed blood; you take usury and excessive interest and make unjust gain from your neighbours by extortion. And you have forgotten me, declares the Sovereign Lord.*

Ezek 33:31 *My people come to you, as they usually do, and sit before you to listen to your words, but they do not put them into practice. With their mouths they express devotion, but their hearts are greedy for unjust gain.*

Micah 2:2 *They covet fields and seize them, and houses and take them. They defraud a man of his home, a fellow-man of his inheritance.*

Micah 3:11 *Her leaders judge for a bribe, her priests teach for a price, and her prophets tell fortunes for money. Yet they lean upon the Lord and say, “Is not the Lord among us? No disaster will come upon us.”*

Micah 7:3 *Both hands are skilled in doing evil; the ruler demands gifts, the judge accepts bribes, the powerful dictate what they desire — they all conspire together.*

Hab 2:9-10 *“Woe to him who builds his realm by unjust gain to set his nest on high, to escape the clutches of ruin! You have plotted the ruin of many peoples, shaming your own house and forfeiting your life.”*

Hag 1:6 *“You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it.” □*

JAMES 04:01–03 LUST, DESIRE

The word is used three times in verses 1-3. In verses 1 and 3 the word *hedonon* is used. It means out of your sinful, sensual pleasures. In verse 2 the word is *epithumeite* which means a yearning passion for (A.T. Robertson. *Word Pictures In The New Testament*, Vol. 6, p. 49).

Note that desire, lust, a yearning passion for is not always evil. In verse 5 the Spirit “envies intensely.” In Luke 22:15 Christ desires (yearns) to eat the Passover with the apostles. What is it that distinguishes a good desire from an evil desire? At least two major things.

1. Motive: if one desires the necessities of life, his desire is good. The necessities — food, clothing, shelter, love, care — are essential for the fullness of life. When a man seeks God for these things, God provides the necessities.
2. Greed: desiring food is good, but if one desires food to spend it on his pleasures, that is, he desires food and food and food, it is wrong passion. It becomes sinful, sensual pleasure. Desiring, love is good, but if one desires love to spend it on his pleasures, that is, he desires love and love and love, it is wrong passion (1 Th. 4:5). □

LUKE 16:19–21 SIN

“There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man’s table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.” Luke 16:19-21

The sin of the rich man would not be a sin in the eyes of most societies. There is no record of a vicious, glaring sin; no record of a vulgar, public sin. He was not cruel — he never ordered Lazarus from his gate nor refused Lazarus the crumbs from his table. He was not a tyrant; not an oppressor of the poor, not a monstrous member of society. Rather, he was socially responsible, an upright citizen, respected and well-liked. No earthly court would ever think of arresting or condemning him. In society’s eyes he was honoured and highly esteemed. People liked him and spoke well of him. What then was his sin?

1. The word luxury (lampros) means that he was flamboyant, displaying his wealth in materialistic ways.
2. The “gate” was a large gate indicating that his home was a large house or a mansion.

3. The purple and fine linen show that he had the latest styles and the ultimate in luxury.
4. The words “every day” show that he feasted every day. His sin was self-indulgence, comfort, ease, luxury, extravagant living. He sought the things and pleasures of this world. He was complacent, hoarding and allowing money to lie around making more and more for himself and his estate while needs lay all around him — right at his gate. He neglected and ignored others, most significantly, Lazarus. The needs of a degenerate world concerned him little, if at all. He wanted what others in the world had, plenty for themselves and more. The world acknowledged and honoured those who had plenty, and he wanted such recognition and honour for himself. He wanted what others had and he wanted to keep up with them.

Mat 25:43 “I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.”

1 John 3:17 If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?

Mark 4:19 “But the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful.”

1 Tim 6:9 People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction.

Zec 7:6 And when you were eating and drinking, were you not just feasting for yourselves?

Deu 15:7 If there is a poor man among your brothers in any of the towns of the land that the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted toward your poor brother. □

III. *Luke 12:20 Fear: Death and Judgment*

Fear — your life may be required and demanded tonight. Note several things.

1. It was God who now spoke. It was God who knew the thoughts of the man. It was God who knew the man was to die that very night. The man did not know it, nor did anyone else.
2. The man was to die that night. Everyone has his night (day) to die, and this was his night.
3. The man’s “life” was required. God required and demanded it. His soul was not going to cease existing. It was to exist in another world. Existence was not over for the

man. The man's soul was simply to be in another world, in the spiritual dimension of existence.

4. The man was called a "fool" by God. He had lived as a fool, lived entirely for himself. He had refused to think about the truth, about the uncertainty of life. There was a good possibility that he might not live as long as he wished to live.

Luke 12:39-40 *"But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him."*

Rom 6:21 *What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death!*

Heb 6:8 *But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned.*

1 Pet 4:7 *The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.*

1 Pet 4:17-18 *For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And, "If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"*

2 Pet 2:17 *These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them.*

Jude 1:13 *They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame; wandering stars, for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever.*

Rev 21:8 *"But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars — their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death."*

Psa 9:17 *The wicked return to the grave, all the nations that forget God.*

Psa 37:2 *For like the grass they will soon wither, like green plants they will soon die away.*

Psa 37:10 *A little while, and the wicked will be no more; though you look for them, they will not be found.*

Psa 37:35-36 *I have seen a wicked and ruthless man flourishing like a green tree in its native soil, but he soon passed away and was no more; though I looked for him, he could not be found.*

Psa 92:7 *That though the wicked spring up like grass and all evildoers flourish, they will be forever destroyed.*

Psa 55:23 *But you, O God, will bring down the wicked into the pit of corruption; bloodthirsty and deceitful men will not live out half their days. But as for me, I trust in you.*

Psa 112:10 *The wicked man will see and be vexed, he will gnash his teeth and waste away; the longings of the wicked will come to nothing.*

Prov 5:21-23 *For a man's ways are in full view of the Lord, and he examines all his paths. The evil deeds of a wicked man ensnare him; the cords of his sin hold him fast. He will die for lack of discipline, led astray by his own great folly.*

Isa 17:14 *In the evening, sudden terror! Before the morning, they are gone! This is the portion of those who loot us, the lot of those who plunder us.*

Ezek 18:23 *Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? declares the Sovereign Lord. Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live?*

IV. Luke 12:20–21 *Spiritual Dimension of Life*

Fear — wealth is not a permanent possession; someone else gets it. The man left every penny behind. He took nothing with him. Now note why. This is a point seldom thought about. He could take nothing with him because the strength, the energy, the power, the life of his body had left. The Bible reveals...

- that the life of a man's body is his spirit
- that the spirit lives forever

Note: when the spirit left, the man's strength and energy and power were gone. His body had to lie down. Note something else: his spirit was spiritual, of another dimension of being. It belonged to another world, another life. Therefore, all material possessions had to be left behind.

1 Tim 6:7 *For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.*

Heb 11:24-25 *By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time.*

James 5:3 *Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days.*

Rev 3:16-17 *So, because you are lukewarm — neither hot nor cold — I am about to spit you out of my mouth. You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.*

Job 20:28 *A flood will carry off his house, rushing waters on the day of God's wrath.*

Psa 39:6 *Man is a mere phantom as he goes to and fro: He bustles about, but only in vain; he heaps up wealth, not knowing who will get it*

Psa 49:10 *For all can see that wise men die; the foolish and the senseless alike perish and leave their wealth to others.*

Eccl 2:18 *I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun, because I must leave them to the one who comes after me.*

Eccl 2:26 *To the man who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness, but to the sinner he gives the task of gathering and storing up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.*

Jer 17:11 *Like a partridge that hatches eggs it did not lay is the man who gains riches by unjust means. When his life is half gone, they will desert him, and in the end he will prove to be a fool.*

Hag 1:5-6 *Now this is what the Lord Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways. You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it." ■*