



When I was a younger man, I loved daydreaming of endless possibilities and of great things to come in the future. I did not think much of predictability and didn't care for anything that would limit my ability to change plans on a moment's notice. Spontaneity was a way of life in my youth but things have changed since then.

As an adult, a husband and a father, I have come to love predictability. I am rarely spontaneous and carefully think through all of my plans, to prepare for and prevent any potential disruptions. I don't like surprises.

These past few weeks have been difficult for me on many levels. One of the most challenging issues for me is that I have become acutely aware of how much my control of things was an illusion. In the grand scheme of things, I am really not in control of much. Whether I like it or not, the world is full of surprises and I should be careful to hold any of my personal plans for the future loosely.

Lately, all of us probably have had much more down time than were used to. During that time, I have been reconsidering priorities and reflecting often on what drives our commitments and decisions as a family. This season has been good for that. While I've had to accept that there is much more uncertainty in life than I would prefer, there is one thing that is unshakeable and certain forever. True and eternal life is found only in Christ and He is to be our treasure. This truth should govern the priorities of the Christian's life and keep us anchored amidst seasons of shaking, when we see just how fleeting the temporal things of this world truly are.

This week, I have been considering a parable from the Gospel of Luke.

The Parable of the Rich Fool

***¹³ Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”
¹⁴ But he said to him, “Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?”¹⁵ And he said to them, “Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”¹⁶ And he told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich man produced plentifully,¹⁷ and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’¹⁸ And he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.’¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.”²⁰ But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’²¹ So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”***

We are so easily fooled by the idea that we’re truly living if we have lots of possessions. However, life is not about the things we have. According to Jesus, life is knowing the living God.

He said, ***“This is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent”*** John 17:3.

Being a productive member of society is not a bad thing. It is not bad to be successful or to be prosperous. Getting a good job, a promotion and a raise are not bad. Enjoying a good return on a wise investment is not evil.

In the parable the man is not called a fool because he was a successful farmer. Still, we can’t ignore that he was called a fool. Not only was he called a fool but he also lost his soul. So, what was the reason?

While this farmer was being productive and being prosperous, there was apparently no concern about a relationship with God. He kept acquiring more stuff and that stuff became his treasure, his comfort and his security. Again, it is important to note that bigger barns and more stuff were not really the problem. To understand the problem, we must look at what he said.

¹⁸ And he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.’¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.”

You see where his treasure was? He was saying, “I’ve made it. I am rich now. My treasure will be relaxing, eating, drinking, having parties. Those are my riches now. These riches are my life. This life is all made possible by my barns.”

We might all be asking the same question right now, "Well what's so wrong about all of that?" Nothing is wrong with that, if there is no God and there is no resurrection. Remember what the Apostle Paul said?

"If the dead are not raised, 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die'" 1 Corinthians 15:32.

If this world is all there is, if there is no God, if there is no resurrection, then it would make sense to find life in temporary riches and the luxuries wealth provides.

Let's revisit the parable though. Jesus concludes this parable with a very clear point.

²¹ So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God." Luke 12:21

What does that mean? What is being rich toward God? Jesus often used contrast when teaching. In this case, He was showing the contrast between believing that life is all about possessions versus believing that life is truly about knowing God. Being rich toward God means that our hearts are set on Him and that He is our treasure. As a result, we value Him as greater riches than anything we could possibly possess on this earth.

This is a reason that money can be dangerous. Money, in and of itself, is not bad. However, the Bible teaches us that the love of money is the root of evil. It pulls our hearts in the wrong direction, away from loving God. It causes us to treasure the wrong thing.

I want to remind you, the problem for the farmer is not that his field was prosperous. His issue was that he no longer viewed God as his treasure. If God would have been his treasure he would have viewed his life and possessions much differently. Rather than looking at all of his possessions and accumulated wealth while saying, "Now I'm going to relax, eat, drink and be merry," he would have said, "Thank you God! It is all yours. I thank you for my fields. I thank you that you have made me prosperous. Thank you for all that you have given. How can I use it for your glory? It is all from you. It all belongs to you. How would you like me to use it?" This would have revealed that his heart belonged to God, not to his stuff. It would have revealed that God was his treasure, above all else.

Right now there is a great deal to worry about, for those who have trusted in their personal wealth and treasured their possessions above all. Layoffs are happening all over the nation. Jobs are being lost and may not come back in the foreseeable future. Some have lost a large percentage of the wealth they had invested and accumulated in retirement accounts. All of the uncertainty presents an opportunity to pray and call out to God for help. He knows our needs. He promises to give us our daily bread. Beyond prayers for daily bread, we should also pray for insight into our own hearts. We should ask Him to reveal to us if we have been treasuring the wrong things. We should seek Him for wisdom into how to handle possessions, how to hold these temporary things loosely so that they don't have an inappropriate hold on us.

Perhaps we could pray, "Lord, I don't need a bigger bank account. I don't need a bigger home. I don't need a better anything. What I do need is you. I need you, above all else. Any of the good things I have are gifts from you. Whether I have little or much, how can I use all that you give to me, in a way that honors and glorifies you? How can I use the things you provide to reveal to the world that you are my treasure?"

You are in our prayers daily.

You are loved.

Tony