

The Rich Fool

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[0 : 00] Good evening. It's an honour and a pleasure to be speaking here this evening. And as Alistair said earlier on, we are concluding our series in the parables of Jesus from the Gospel of Luke.

And this evening we're going to be looking at the parable of the rich fool, as it is known. This is Luke chapter 12. So we'll see here someone who lives a life of greed rather than a life for God.

And also we will have communion later on and we'll think on Christ's death in order to save us. And this parable, I think, serves as a reminder of what God has saved us from.

When I was growing up, I can remember when the gold of the Pharaohs exhibition came to Edinburgh. I don't know if any of you can remember that, if any guesses on which year it might have been.

It was 1988. There was no prizes for that. It was 1988. I went there with my school class and I remember seeing all these beautiful gold artefacts that were on show from Egypt.

[1 : 07] The highlight was the gold funeral mask of this Pharaoh, Sussanese I, which some of you might remember. The mask, not the Pharaoh. We're not that old. So this was the large golden mask in the shape of his face.

And the Pharaohs were normally buried with lots of goods, drink, food, occasionally even a chariot complete with horses. All this so that he would have a comfortable afterlife.

And I always wondered what happened to those that weren't so rich. Now all these things are in a museum or they've been looted. They were not what the original owner had planned for them.

And this evening we'll look at another rich man who had plans for his possessions. A plan that also did not work out. Someone who wanted to hoard his items to make money.

But as we'll see, God had other plans. So today, together, we will look at three things from this passage. We'll look at a fool's fight, which is from verse 13 to 15.

[2 : 12] A fool's fight. Then we'll have a look at a fool's mind in verses 16 to 19. And then lastly in verses 20 and 21, we will see the fool's future.

A fool's fight, a fool's mind, and the fool's future. So what is a fool? What do you think of when you hear that word? Well, according to the dictionary, it's a person who behaves in a silly way without thinking.

Or, in the old times, it was someone who worked in the court of a king or a queen to entertain them by telling jokes. But what does God mean here in this passage?

By fool. The Bible has much to say on the subject. Proverbs alone mentions the fool over 30 times. A fool can be someone who is ignorant or does not do what is morally right or has an inflated opinion of themselves whilst ignoring God.

According to Proverbs 12, verse 15, the way of a fool is right in his own eyes. And I think that is what we will see in this parable. So a fool's fight in verses 13 to 15.

[3 : 28] So let's set the scene. Jesus has been speaking to a massive crowd in the thousands, according to verse 1. There's so many people that they're trampling and standing over each other.

Jesus has been teaching on hypocrisy, attacking the religious leaders of the time. He's spoken about future judgment and also about the work of the Holy Spirit.

And it's this section that also contains the loved verse that we are so important to God that even the hairs on our head are numbered. So this huge crowd is pressing in.

People are standing on each other. Not many are able to get close to Jesus. But this man manages to get close. Jesus pauses for a moment. The man sees his opportunity.

And he asks Jesus something. What does he say? What does he ask the Son of God, the miracle worker? Look at verse 13. Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.

[4 : 31] Basically, tell my brother to give me what I'm due. Of all the things to ask the Son of God, it seems as if he's going to ask Jesus a question. He starts, teacher. But it's not.

It's a demand. He doesn't ask Jesus to weigh up his claim to see if it's right or not. He just demands. This is someone who's using Jesus to get what they want.

This is something completely unrelated to what Jesus has just been talking on, these eternal matters. And this man is focused solely on his own immediate needs. It's also a cold, loveless demand.

What do I mean by that? Well, it would seem this man has just lost his father and is squabbling with his brother over dividing up the estate. This man, it would seem, is fighting over money.

And his brother is likely there because he says, tell his brother, he asked Jesus. What a foolish fight. If this man is successful in getting what he thinks he is due, then he loses his brother.

[5 : 38] It's money over family. And unfortunately, I'm sure we can all think of families who have been torn apart over money or inheritance squabbles. So what does Jesus do?

Well, he doesn't get drawn into the argument. Look at verse 14. Jesus replied, Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?

The rabbis would often be called to settle disputes. But Jesus refuses to intervene, not because he is unqualified, but because he is not called to do so.

His mission is to seek and save the lost, as Jesus states later on in Luke's gospel. He is not here to resolve disputes. And it's interesting that the word arbiter in Greek literally means divider.

This is a likely outcome of this situation. A family divided. The brothers would have probably not spoken after this point again. So this was truly a fool's fight.

[6 : 45] And as a result of this interruption, Jesus then turns back to the crowd, as we see in verse 15. Watch out. Be on your guard against all kinds of greed.

Life does not consist in an abundance of possessions. The New King James Version has, For one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.

Greed here is the excessive desire to have more, especially wealth or possessions. To have more. Last century, the American oil magnate, John D. Rockefeller, was worth approximately \$400 billion in today's terms.

\$400 billion. And he was once asked, How much money is enough money? And his answer? Just a little bit more. It's never been satisfied.

That's why Jesus warns us of this. Beware of greed. It's so easy to be greedy with our money, with our things, with our time. Wanting to keep them just for us, and wanting more.

[7 : 54] Most likely what we see others having, it affects both the rich, and the poor. It is constantly wanting more and more, but never been satisfied. And greed is also a barrier, to our relationship with Jesus.

As Christians we know, that we can only ever be satisfied, by a new life, in Christ. Not by the things that we own. And only by being generous, with what God has given us, can we overcome greed.

So Jesus continues in verse 15, For one's life does not consist, in the abundance of the things, they possess. This completely flies in the face, of what most people feel today.

Life is about acquiring things. You are what you have. The life we see in the films, in TV shows, on Instagram, in Facebook. It's the car, the house, the holiday.

That's how many people, value themselves, and unfortunately, value those around them. Where do they work? How many rooms do they have? Where do they go on holiday?

[9 : 06] Where do they lie, in relation to us? Are they doing better? How can I have that? Do we fall into this trap? It's easy to do.

Does what they have, or don't have, because value people more, or less? Or does it cause tension, due to jealousy? For one's life, does not consist, in the abundance, of the things he possesses.

We are more, than what we have, certainly to God. So Jesus, he uses this foolish fight, to then teach the crowd, using the parable.

And we'll see in verses 16 to 19, a fool's mind. So remember the definition, of a fool from earlier on, someone who has an inflated, opinion of themselves, whilst ignoring God.

And according to Proverbs, the way of a fool, is right in his own eyes. Keep this in mind, as we look at this parable. If we notice in verse 16, that the man, most likely a farmer, is rich already.

[10 : 10] Also, he has made, his fortune honestly. There's no mention of, dishonesty or thievery here. But we are not talking about, the average farmer at the time, who would probably have made,

just about enough, to feed himself, and his family, from the land that he had.

This is a man, who is very rich, in comparison. He had barns. He would have been well known, and influential, in his community. And where did his riches come from?

Well, the passage tells us this, in verse 16. The ground, of a certain rich man. This was a gift, from God. Without the sun, the rain, and the soil, nothing would have grown.

And then we see, in verse 17, that he has, a problem. He thought to himself, what shall I do? I have no place, to store my crops. So this is a huge harvest, bigger, than any before.

As his barns, were not big enough. God, had blessed him, with a bumper crop. So what did he do? Then, he says, this is what I'll do. I'll give all this extra, to the poor?

[11 : 24] No. I'll send it over, to my friends? No. Not this guy. The thing, that would have been done, at the time, in this culture, would have been, to go to the elders, of the village, or the city, and discuss the problem, with them.

They would have been found, at the city gates. But not the rich fool. What does the rich fool do?

Well, let's look at his words, in verse 17. What shall I do?

I have no place, to store my crops. Then he said, this is what I will do. I will tear down, my barns, and build bigger ones. And there I, will store all my grain, and my goods.

So he has to think about his problem. And then look, at all the number of times, he talks about himself. I, me, mine. Everything, is his. The problem here, is not that he is rich, but that he has no thought, for God.

No thought, of thankfulness, for this blessing. And no thought, for others. So I'll say that again, just for clarity. The problem here, is not that he is rich, but that he has no thought, for God.

[12 : 31] No thought, of thankfulness, and no thought, of others. He's got too big, for his own barns. And we find in verse, we find in Psalm 14, the fool, says in his heart, there is no God.

And that is exactly, what we find here, in the mind, of this fool. The complete absence, of God. He gives no thought, to God's guidance, or to anyone else's, for that matter.

He must be the wisest person, he knows. So why bother, asking anyone else? We must, also be careful, not to fall, into the same trap. Do we ask, God's guidance, for the decisions, that we make, in our lives, for the lives, of our family, and the life, of our church gathering?

Do we pray, and ask what God's will, is? So here, in this section, the rich fool, has mistaken, stewardship, with ownership. The problem is not, about planning, for the future.

This is something, we should do, as good stewards. We should, prepare for the future, and take care, of what God has given us. The problem here, is that the rich fool, does not seek, God's guidance, on how to use, this harvest.

[13 : 45] Don't fall, into the same trap. Be a good steward, good steward, of what you have, but realize, that everything we have, is a gift from God. We don't really, own it. Don't mistake, stewardship, with ownership.

So we see, in verse 17, his first thought, is not about, who to share, his harvest with, or even what to do, with the surplus. He already knows, what he's going to do with it.

He's going to store it, keep it for himself. The question, he has, and the problem, is how, to store it. So as well, there's no mention of God, and there's no consideration, of family, or friends.

Perhaps, he's alone, with no family, but, a rich man, with no friends. He also doesn't think, of the neighboring farmers either, who may have benefited, for the surplus grain, or for the workers, in his field.

He's already rich, and probably doesn't need the extra, but decides, to keep it all for himself. So what's he going to do, with this, bumper crop? He says, you have plenty of grain, laid up for many years.

[14 : 52] I'll stop working, and use my time, to help others? No. I'll serve God? No. Not this guy. What will he do with it? He'll use it, to have, an easy life.

Eat, drink, and be merry. Basically, a party attitude. See, here, he is being greedy, with his time. It's all about enjoyment, all about himself.

No thought for others. It's me, me, me. Can you cast your mind back, two years, to images of shopping trolleys, packed with toilet rolls, and cans of beans?

Covid, caused some to stock up, to help, elderly relatives. Some were panic buying, for themselves, and yet others, were stocking up, just to make money.

The Guardian reported, back in 2020, that one UK seller, had made a thousand pounds, from selling, toilet roll at fifty pounds. He made a thousand pounds. So during lockdown, some people were hoarding, items, and selling them, for hugely inflated prices, just to make money.

[16:00] If you control the stock, you can control the price. And we see, the same thinking, and actions, in the rich fool, that we have just read. He will sell the grain, a little at a time, to keep prices high, and he will get a good price, selling it, for many years.

Or so he thinks. Today, he would be credited, as being a good businessman, making enough money, so that he never has to work again. An impossible dream, for those, the majority of the people, back then, and still rare, even now.

But he has made, a plan, that does not include God. If you don't put God first, it will lead to a plan, that he can't deliver on. And this is what we see here, in the life of this rich fool.

A future plan, that the rich fool can't deliver, because he has no future. And this leads us on, to verses 20 and 21, which show us, the fool's future.

But God said, to him, you fool, this very night, your life will be demanded from you. Then, who will get, what you have prepared, for yourself?

[17:12] The next words, are from God. These are very sobering words. The rich fool's life, will end that very night, and he will stand before God. And his great plan, for the future, he had overlooked two things.

He was mortal, and he was accountable. He was mortal, and tonight his life, is over. There are no second chances. He will stand before God, utterly unprepared.

And he's accountable. It says, God says, your life will be demanded. This conveys the idea, of a life as a loan, of accounts being settled. Our life is a gift from God, and one day, we must show, how we have spent it.

Here, Jesus describes, a tragedy. The rich fool, has spent his life, accumulating things. And God asks the questions, who will get, what you have prepared, for yourself?

The rich fool, had been building, a little kingdom, for himself, but having no part, in the only kingdom, that really matters. God's kingdom. And we see, in verse 21, this is how it will be, with anyone, who stores up things, for himself, but is not rich, towards God.

[18:32] As a Christian, are you kingdom focused? Are you using the gifts, that God has given you, as a steward, to further, God's kingdom, to spread the love, and the good news, of God's forgiven love?

Are you using, your time and money? We do these things though, to show God's love, to this world, not to earn God's favour. If this wasn't a parable, I would wonder, what happened, to the things, the rich fool, had gathered, in his lifetime.

Was there someone there, to inherit this richness, this riches? Or would there, be a dispute over it, as we had, in the start of the passage, with a fight over money?

Today, the rich fool, would have been seen, as a success. Work hard, save well, don't think of others. But thankfully, how different, were God? Jesus is the absolute, opposite of this, of what the world, would describe, as a success story.

He gave up everything, the position of power, and honour, to live a life of poverty, and ultimately die, at the hands of those, he had created. He consistently, shunned power, or attempts, to put him in power.

[19:47] He avoided fame, and often told those, he had healed, not to tell, anyone who had done it. We read in, 2nd Corinthians, chapter 8, verse 9, for you know, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake became poor, so that you, through his poverty, might become rich.

Jesus gave up everything, and lived a perfect life, with one plan in mind, God's plan, to do his Father's will. The plan that God the Father, always had in place, before the world was made, that Jesus would die, in your place, and take the punishment in due, for all your sins.

The plan would mean, that all of our sins, would be punished. The payment met, the account settled, but not on us, on Jesus Christ. Through this, we have become rich, towards God, because of what Christ had done, not because of anything, that we have performed.

And this is what the rich fool, lacked, he trusted in himself, and what he had hoarded. He had no thought, of the next life, and the judgment to come. But, we need to realise, that even if the rich fool, had given away, everything that he had, he could not have earned, or bought his way, into God's

kingdom.

The only way, is through God's forgiveness, for all the wrong, that we have done in our life, asking him, to forgive us, and trusting that Jesus, has paid the price. That's how much God loves you.

[21 : 23] He has done everything. There is nothing, that you can do, only believe, and accept, this free gift. And as I draw to a close, I wonder what happened, to the man, who made the demand of Jesus, at the start of this passage.

After Jesus had finished, speaking, did he slink off, and continue his foolish fight? Or did he fix, the relationship, with his brother? Today, you have an opportunity, that the rich fool, never had.

Another evening, an evening to make a decision. You have the opportunity, to fix, a broken relationship, with God, or to continue, in a foolish fight, with the God, that loves you, and sent his son, to die for you.

Which will you choose? Ultimately, we need to stand, before him one day, and give an account, of ourselves. We can either, do that on our own, like the rich fool, and face God's judgment, or we can do it, through Christ, who will stand before God, and plead, our case for us.

This evening, we will end, with an empty tomb. Jesus is not there, he is risen, there is new life, there is hope. Don't let this opportunity, pass you by, you may not get another.

[22 : 41] If you have not already, please accept, this new life, that Jesus is offering. The only life, that truly satisfies. And may God, bless you. Father, thank you for Jesus, that he rose from the dead, so that we can have, life.

Thank you for your word, the Bible, where we can learn, about your plan for us, and where we can read, for God so loved the world, that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him, shall not perish, but have eternal life.

Thank you for this plan, and for sending Jesus. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.