

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

You Must be Born Again!

“The man who has met God in Christ is no longer what he used to be, he is a new man and for him old things are passed away and behold all things are become new. Have you seen yourself responsible before a holy God? Have you met God, is He real to you, do you know Him? Is this knowledge of God in Christ the biggest thing, the central thing in your life? Are you aware of a new man in yourself, a new life, a new interest, a new power, a new being, something beyond yourself that you cannot understand, and have you said with Paul, ‘I live, yet not I but Christ lives in me and the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me’? [Martyn Lloyd Jones, Old Testament Evangelistic Sermons, Banner of Truth]

www.sermonaudio.com/crc

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The Rich Fool

March 30th, 2025

Sermon Text: Luke 12:13-21

Scripture Reading: Luke 12:1-21

We have here in the text just read, the context in which the parable of

the rich fool appears. The Lord Jesus had been addressing His disciples, while the huge crowds were gathering and actually trampling one another to hear Him! Jesus begins by confronting the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. J.C. Ryle comments:

“The first thing that demands our attention in these verses is Christ’s warning against hypocrisy. This is

a warning of which the importance can never be overrated. It was delivered by our Lord more than once during His earthly ministry. It was intended to be a standing caution to His whole church in every age and in every part of the world. It was meant to remind us that the principles of the Pharisees are deeply ingrained in human nature, and that Christians should be always on their guard against them. Hypocrisy is a subtle leaven which the heart is always ready to receive! It is a leaven which once received into the heart infects the whole character of a man's Christianity. Of this leaven, says our Lord, in words that should often ring in our ears, beware! Let us ever nail this caution in our memories and bind it on our hearts. The plague is around us on every side! The danger is at all times. What is the essence of Romanism, and formalism, and ceremonialism? What is it all but the leaven of the Pharisees under one shape or another? The Pharisees are not extinct! Pharisaism still lives. If we would not become Pharisees, then let us cultivate a "heart religion." Let us

realize daily that the God with whom we have to do looks far below the outward surface of our profession, and that He measures us by the state of our hearts. Let us be real and true in our Christianity. Let us abhor all part-acting, and affectation, and semblance of devotion put on for public occasions but not really felt within. Our hypocrisy may deceive man and get us the reputation of being very religious, but it cannot deceive God. There is nothing covered up that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. Whatever we are in religion, let us never wear a cloak or a mask of religion."

The Lord then continues with still another subject concerning the soul –

Luk 12:4 "I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do.

Luk 12:5 But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him!

And still more:

Luk 12:8 “And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God,

Luk 12:9 but the one who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God.

Luk 12:10 And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.

Luk 12:11 And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say,

Luk 12:12 for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.”

Have you ever been in a setting where a teacher is speaking or lecturing – perhaps in a classroom – and someone in the audience raises their hand or just blurts out some inappropriate question?

That is what we have here. Jesus had been addressing vitally, eternally, and crucial matters of the soul, of our relationship to God, of heaven or hell. And into that setting there is this voice in the crowd:

“Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”

There are many people who view religion as no more than a means to address their earthly issues. To deal with mere surface matters. That is how they view the church, and even God Himself. “I have a problem. I expect the pastor or the church members and the Lord to fix my difficulties.” And too often we allow ourselves to be drawn into that sort of thing rather than to stay on target with the things our Lord calls us to.

After Jesus tells this powerful parable of the rich fool as a warning and rebuke to this man whose world was consumed by this dispute over an inheritance, Jesus will turn our perspective back to heavenly things – to the really important things:

Luk 12:22 And he said to his disciples, “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on.

Luk 12:23 For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing.

Luk 12:24 Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds!

Luk 12:25 And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?

Luk 12:26 If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest?

Luk 12:27 Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

Luk 12:28 But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith!

Luk 12:29 And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried.

Luk 12:30 For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them.

Luk 12:31 Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you.

This man had completely wrong priorities. He was anxious about things that, in the end, do not really matter, and he was failing to be concerned with the things that determine eternity, heaven, hell, and his soul. He earns a stern rebuke from the Lord for *coveting* possessions. His entire attitude toward Christ was wrong – to him, religion and the Lord were a means to get what he wanted.

How many people today are just like him? They use the church, the pastor, and even God Himself as something to get some earthly thing for themselves. You can think of many examples I am sure.

- Money

- Prestige
- Settling disputes in their favor
- Fixing their problems
- Gaining God’s approval even while they continue to live without repentance

Such people expect the church to give them these things. But the Lord Jesus told this man, and we need to tell such people – *Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?* We as Christ’s people are called primarily to speak to matters of the soul. Sin, God’s wrath, God’s holiness, redemption in Christ, justification by faith alone in Christ alone, the Narrow Way and the dangers of Broadway.

I can tell you and many of you have experienced this as well – in all the years I have been a pastor, I can think of very, very, very few times that people have come to me and said something like – “I need to be put right with God. My sin is weighing heavily upon me. What must I do to be saved?”

And far, far too often I have been drawn in when people expect me

and the church to fix their earthly issues. That is not our fundamental mission given to us by the Lord. We are not the judges or arbitrators over inheritance squabbles! Let people take those matters to the civil authorities. Rather, we must be like Jesus. Here is how He responded-

Luk 12:15 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.”

This man was covetous. His sin was consuming his life – so much so that rather than hearing Christ’s words, his only thoughts were focused on the squabble with his brother.

Why do we come to church on the Lord’s Day? Why is religion part of my life? We would do well to examine ourselves in this regard. People profess to be Christians for many reasons, most all of which are wrong. What is our motive? What is MY motive?

If I had to name one major error that I have made as a pastor repeatedly, and which I believe I have really only learned to correct in these last few years, it is this: Being drawn in to people's earthly problems, thinking I can fix them, and thereby being drawn off of the main mission the Lord gives us. Jesus did not make that mistake.

“Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?”

And then Jesus went even deeper into the man's thinking:

“One's-life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”

This man had made *possessions* the central matter of his life. STUFF will not give you life. Christ is our life. True life is eternal life in the new creation. Life is being born again and following Christ though it cost us everything. The world looks at the rich man and says, *“Now that is living!”* But it isn't. STUFF is not LIFE. Christ is!

John 6:63-68 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. **The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.** (64) But there are some of you who do not believe.” (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) (65) And he said, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.” (66) After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. (67) So Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you want to go away as well?” (68) Simon Peter answered him, **“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life,**

“We must have confidence and assurance! In what? In the Bible as the Word of God. Why? Because it is God's Word, because it is God's revelation; because it is not the theories and the ideas of men with respect to truth; because it is not what men have discovered and arrived at as the result of their great study and scholarship and

meditation. It is what the living God has revealed to men, has shown them, and has commanded them to preach...This is God's Word, this is God's truth. This is infallible because it is God's. This is the first weapon of our warfare. This is something to be proclaimed." (Lloyd-Jones, The Weapons of our Warfare, Knowing the Times, Banner of Truth)

Here was LIFE in front of this man. Here were the words of LIFE being declared by the Son of God. And yet the only reason he had come was to GET, to USE the Lord Jesus for his own covetous ends in getting possessions destined to perish. Many people today who claim to be Christians are just like this man. To them, God is someone to USE to GET. That is how they view the church, and when they see that they are not GETTING, they leave.

Then Jesus presents this man and the crowd with the parable which we entitle, *The Parable of the Rich Fool*:

Luke 12:16-21 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.**"

This parable is meant as a rebuke to the covetous man, but more broadly to all such people, and as instruction and warning to us. The primary thesis is that last line:

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

This man, Jesus said, was a *fool*. He was rich and so the world would envy him and regard him as *wise*. But real wisdom is God's wisdom. Real wisdom is wisdom that stands the scrutiny of God and of eternity. Held up to the mirror of the final judgment, this man was a fool. Why?

Because his treasure was not real treasure. By the world's measure, it was. He:

- Had land
- It was fertile, choice land
- It produced abundant crops

In fact, the crops were so abundant that his barns were filled and he was in a dilemma – what would he do with the excess?

Here is one test of true treasure – *what a person does with his excess*. This man in no way could use all that he had. What he does end up doing with it is *storing it*. His money, as it were, was just going to sit there. What was he thinking? Simply this-

That his life, the value of his being, his security, was provided him by his bank balance. It was, we can say, his god! He looked at his possessions as if they had energy to impart life to him.

This is what Paul meant when he said:

Colossians 3:5 Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

See it? *Covetousness makes the thing coveted into a god. Therefore covetousness is idolatry. This rich man was an idolater.* He believed that his possessions could impart life to him.

NOTE: We said that one test of true treasure is, *what a person does with his excess*. There were many good things this fool could have done with his money. He and the Rich man in that other parable involving Lazarus, were kin to one another. This fool had no thought toward others. There were many people in

need he could have helped. Neither is there any mention here of him considering tithing on his wealth – something the Law required.

This is astonishing selfishness. So many needs around him, and yet he is going to put his money in the bank and let it sit. He will use some of it to build more barns for storage, and even that amount is a selfish waste.

What does the world say about wealth? Keep it. Hoard it. Use it to make more, and then hoard that. Indulge yourself. Buy multi-million dollar yachts that cost millions just to maintain. Buy magnificent real estate. And the world says that to give it away is something only a fool would do. God's measure of real treasure is quite the opposite.

But here is the irony – *the living and true God is the one with the power of life and death. He is the only one who imparts life.* He is the only One to be worshipped.

What About Thankfulness?

You also notice something glaringly absent in this man's response to God's blessing of his crops – *he does not give one thought to giving thanks to the Lord.* He only thanks and credits himself. If this man were a Jew, and I imagine that he was, then he had heard the Law:

Deuteronomy 7:11-13 You shall therefore be careful to do the commandment and the statutes and the rules that I command you today. (12) “And because you listen to these rules and keep and do them, the LORD your God will keep with you the covenant and the steadfast love that he swore to your fathers. (13) He will love you, bless you, and multiply you. He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your wine and your oil, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock, in the land that he swore to your fathers to give you.

This promise is repeated several times in the Old Testament. So there is little doubt that this man

knew it. Yet he gives no credit, no thankfulness at all – to the Lord. He is all about himself. “*I will build.*” There are, in fact if you count them, SIX times that he uses this first person pronoun – “I will, I will, I will.” The emphasis is no mistake. The Lord is intentionally showing us what a fool this man was. *He is acting out of the belief that HE is the captain of his fate.*

But what is the truth:

Psalms 90:12 So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.

Psalms 39:4-5 “O LORD, make me know my end and what is the measure of my days; let me know how fleeting I am! (5) Behold, you have made my days a few handbreadths, and my lifetime is as nothing before you. Surely all mankind stands as a mere breath!
Selah

Psalms 90:10 The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet their span is but

toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away.

Yet what is this fool’s thinking? *That his life still has many years left in it!* Essentially, what he thinks, is that death is not something he need be concerned about anytime soon.

“Relax, Eat, Drink, Be Merry”

There is his philosophy of life. And we need not look far around us in our day to find people who embrace the very same motto for themselves. And yet many of them, having spent their entire lives just as this fool did, die within the first year of their retirement! Never having given any thought to their soul, to the Lord, to heaven or to hell.

(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.”**

Verse 20 is very interesting. The Lord Jesus tells us *what God said to this man*. I conclude that this was no fiction – that this man had been a real man- *The land of a certain rich man...* And that God actually had spoken to him – “you fool!” We are not told how God communicated to him – just that He did so. Could it be that in that evening the man was stricken with some fatal malady so that he found himself on his death bed realizing he was about to die? God’s Spirit certainly could have impressed upon him the folly of his life –

“the things you have prepared, whose will they be?”

Too late. Too late. Perhaps he realized his folly, that he had wasted his life, that he was in fact a pauper in real treasure, *but it was too late*. His life was over and his end was in hell. His wealth would do him no good. It would be of no help now. The truth is quite true – *we cannot take it with us* and as it has also been put – *dead men’s suits have no pockets*.

The false religions of man typically deny this. Think for instance of the Egyptians who would bury the dead with all sorts of possessions. The tombs of Pharaohs would have various treasures – and if I am correct, even some of their slaves would be killed and buried with them so the Pharaoh might have them to serve him in the after life.

In our own day we have seen fools bury a man seated on his favorite Harley-Davidson motorcycle! Man in his sin has all kinds of methods used to deny the reality of death. But all of them are a lie.

The most typical form of this lie is the virtual mantra of the funeral or “celebration of life” as it is now so typically called – “he/she has gone to a better place.” But that is a lie for all who do not know Christ as Savior. This Rich Fool was actually a pauper in hell. There was nothing at all “better” about the place to which he went, and in which he is still now in torment.

Treasure in Heaven

What then is REAL treasure which is treasure toward God? How is a person to be *rich toward God* in contrast to this fool? There is only one way:

1 Timothy 6:17-19 As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. (18) They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, (19) thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

Setting our hope upon God. This means putting our faith in Christ, believing God's Word, thereby being born again and yielding righteous fruit as a result. To be rich toward God is to know Christ, to be known by Him, to have the true riches which only He can give:

Ephesians 3:8 To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the

Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,

Colossians 2:1-3 For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, (2) that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, (3) in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

“The person who has Christ, has everything. The one who has the world has nothing.”