



Luke 12:13-21
Castles Made of Sand

- 13 Then one from 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 an arbitrator over you?"
15 And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses."
16 Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully.
17 "And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?'
18 "So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods.
19 'And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry." '
20 "But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?'
21 "So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

As Jesus is in the midst of teaching about the most important thing on earth, Salvation, as he is speaking of judgment, heaven and hell, there is a man in the crowd, this innumerable multitude of people who is being just eaten up inside. Finally he can bear it no longer and as Jesus pauses briefly in His discourse, the man calls out to him.

What is his burning issue? Is he under conviction of sin, desperate to have an assurance that he will be with Christ in heaven rather than being denied on the last day? No, that's not it, throughout Christ's sermon his thoughts have been on an entirely different issue. Perhaps he has spent the last few minutes stealing glances at his older brother also in the crowd around the master, now he can wait no longer. ***"Teacher!" he calls out "Tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me!"***

Maybe right now you're thinking, "What an idiot!" Here this guy has Jesus, the Son of God, the Messiah, talking to him about heaven and hell, and he's thinking about money? He even gets this wonderful opportunity to ask him a question and *he totally blows it* by asking Jesus to settle a petty legal matter. Why that's the dumbest thing I've ever heard!

Is it though? Can you number the times that you have sat through a sermon, having God's word regarding sin and salvation, heaven and hell, going in your ears, but your thoughts were of your business dealings? Have you ever made the decision to forego church or some spiritual exercise, family devotions perhaps, because you were more concerned with some issue of worldly goods or the getting of them? I'm not a prophet or the Son of a prophet, but I will hazard a guess that for many of you, as this sermon continues, you will be sorely tempted to allow your thoughts to roam freely over issues related to worldly goods and pleasures. The really interesting thing will be to find out if my mentioning that now acts as break or an encouragement to think about them.

The point is that this man in the crowd is not the first person in history to allow the abundance of goods to become his hearts dearest idol and it is doubtful he will be the last.

Jesus, does not give in to his request. Why not, well for two reasons. The first is that Jesus did not come to be an earthly ruler, a civil magistrate whose time is taken up with deciding these matters. Jesus came to do the work of the Gospel, he came to preach the coming of the kingdom, and then to secure the salvation of all his sheep through his atoning death on the cross. As Jesus himself said "the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:10) Would that all of Christ's ministers were as zealous for the spirituality of his church as He is. Unfortunately, the great temptation amongst ministers *is to leave the sphere where we are to do our work and to dabble in the sphere of the civil magistrate*. Into their hands is entrusted the most important of work, prayer and the preaching of the Gospel, and instead we descend into partisan politics, in so doing we not only cease to do the work that God has promised to bless and begin to do work where we are rank amateurs, but we are suddenly making our concern not the things of eternal value, but the fleeting ephemeral and often petty issues of the day.

Brothers and Sisters, I know that I will never be called to account before God for not telling you how to vote or who to vote for, or not acting as unpaid representative of a political party, but I will be called to account if I have blood on my hands because I gave them the impression that the kingdom of God is a worldly political kingdom. Jesus here and elsewhere reminds us that this kind of work is the work of the civil magistrate not the ministers of the church. Incidentally, had Jesus entered into this kind of judgment, he would have faced more than losing his tax exempt status, he would have opened himself up to the charge of acting in the place of Caesar and his delegated authorities. Which is the lie that the Sanhedrin eventually used against Him anyway. So he wisely says "Who made me a judge or arbitrator over you"

The other reason that Jesus doesn't grant his request is because he is more concerned with dealing with the problem of this man's heart, which is his covetousness and worldly mindedness.

Why is this man discontent? ***Because he doesn't have the wealth he feels he is entitled to.*** Maybe he has been cheated, but his problem is that he feels that all would be well if he just had that money. Then he would have peace and satisfaction. You'd think that just simply observing the way of the world would have dealt with that misconception, but it never does.

There's a Country Song by Porter Wagoner, called "A Satisfied Mind" its been covered by Joan Baez and Johnny Cash – It goes in part:

"How many times have
You heard someone say
If I had his money
I could do things my way

But little they know
That it's so hard to find
One rich man in ten
With a satisfied mind"

The wealth that you may think will finally satisfy never does, and the Greek word for **covetousness** that Jesus uses here "*Pleonexia*" conveys that idea, it means literally *an unquenchable thirst for more*. It's like drinking saltwater, the more you consume, the thirstier you are.

What this man *wants*, is not what he actually *needs*, so Jesus answers him instead with a parable about a rich fool.

This man was a very successful farmer, and we to state from the outset that being successful was not the problem, it was the attitude of his heart that was the problem. Wealth, as we learn from Paul in 1 Tim. 6:10 is not the problem, it is the *love of wealth that is the problem*. For that is idolatry, pure and simple, and it will never satisfy the needs of a man's soul. The farmer in the parable however, does not realize that. So when he gets a bumper crop, what is his immediate concern? ***How can I hang on to this new found increase?***

Notice also the copious use of I and my in this parable: "My Crops, my barns, my goods, my soul" God never gets even a nod. The man literally thinks of himself as the Captain of his own salvation and in control of his own destiny. Things he should know he has no control over whatsoever, like the span of his own life, he considers to be his.

After he completes his plan to build bigger barns, he feels he has all he needs, and in his most foolish statement of all he tells his soul that now his soul can ***take it easy*** for many years. Now, he says, my soul can take pleasure in this wealth by eating, drinking and being merry.

How do you feed your soul? Is it with worldly and sensual things? ***Not at all***. Where this mans soul alive, and his actions prove that it was black and dead within him, it would be starving on the diet he is recommending to it. The man thinks he is rich because he now has an abundance of worldly goods, but those riches are neither true nor even lasting.

1) ***Worldly Goods aren't true riches***, turn in your bibles to Revelation 3. Here Jesus is speaking to the lukewarm church of Laodicea. A church that was rich in worldly goods, but at the cost of being culturally compromised, unevangelistic, and basically spiritually dead.

Jesus says to them starting in verse 14 " And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, ' These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God:

15 "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot.

16 "So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.

17 "Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' -- and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked --

18 "I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.

19 "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.

They had an abundance of *things* even worldly gold, but because they had no spiritual zeal, no desire to serve their Savior, no works that would indicate the presence of a true and living faith, Jesus tells them they are in fact: "wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked"

POOR? How can we be POOR? We have all this stuff! Our barns are full! Your goods are worthless, they are idols, trinkets, baubles, they are an offense before the living God and the more you set yourself to accumulating them the deader you become. You would have been better off materially impoverished, but spiritually rich like the Jerusalem church.

To put it in the words of Porter Wagoner:

"The wealthiest person
Is a pauper at times
Compared to the man
With a satisfied mind"

2) **Worldly Goods aren't lasting.** Dust they are to dust they return. We forget that, sometimes it's good to have a reminder.

On vacation this year I had plenty of opportunities to build sandcastles with the kids. Now I don't build small castles, I like to make the kind of castles with a moat and multiple walls, so you gradually work your way back to the inner keep. You know each one a bad scale model of Helms Deep from the two towers. But you know, no matter how much time I spent creating them, no matter how much effort I put in, it was only a matter of time. Eventually the ocean won every time. To quote a line from another song

"And so castles made of sand falls into the sea, eventually"

The rich man set himself to building barns, but he too was just piling up dust and sand. Eventually time would wash it away – and the tide of time has this nasty tendency of rolling in when you don't expect it. He thought it would be many years, but that very night, he was called before the judgment seat of God. And what did he have then? Not even a handful of dust! **He stood before God miserable, poor, blind, and naked, and ultimately the only real and lasting inheritance that man had stored up for himself was an eternity in hell!**

Romans 2:5 "But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,"

So to application questions:

1) **What kind of house are you building?** Are you enriching your family with the treasures of heaven? Fathers - Are you feeding the souls of your wife and your children with the bread of heaven? Or are you convincing yourself that simply by going to work and bringing home money, you have done all you need to. I am amazed at the number of husbands I've spoken to who actually think that is the case. Who think that the only inheritance they need to provide for their kids is the kind that can be kept in a barn. What utter foolishness.

Psalm 127 Unless the LORD builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the LORD guards the city, The watchman stays awake in vain.

2 *It is vain for you to rise up early, To sit up late, To eat the bread of sorrows; For so He gives His beloved sleep.*

Brothers and Sisters, if you are not a household whose number one, unshakable, irreplaceable priority is the Lord Jesus Christ and his Gospel then no matter how big your house is, how long you labored on it, your house is a glorified sandcastle and in time it too will fall into the sea. Don't believe me? Believe Christ then:

Luke 6:47 "Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and acts on them, I will show you whom he is like:

48 he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation on the rock; and when a flood occurred, the torrent burst against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built.

49 "But the one who has heard and has not acted accordingly, is like a man who built a house on the ground without any foundation; and the torrent burst against it and immediately it collapsed, and the ruin of that house was great."

Your kids would be better off dressed in rags yet believing in Christ than richly apparelled and spiritually naked.

2) What kind of life have you built? If your Soul were required of you this very night, as it might be, would you be prepared to go before the judgment seat of Christ? Have you found true rest and satisfaction in him or are you still trying to fill up that God shaped void in your heart with eating, drinking, and being merry. Do you still hope to be satisfied by honor, riches, worldly pleasure, or learning? Read Ecclesiastes, hear Solomon when he dismisses the attempt as utterly futile, *Vanity he says. And trust me, you will never do even as good a job at pursuing satisfaction through those things as Solomon did.*

So to ask Richard Baxter's question: **"Can you remember the state that did fully satisfy you? or, if you could, will it prove lasting?"**

Friends if you have been pursuing vanity and building on sand, do not despair, if you know that, then you are not far from the kingdom many a great saint has started just as badly. Hear the Wisdom of David in Psalm 39:

4 "LORD, make me to know my end, And what *is* the measure of my days, *That* I may know how frail I *am*.

5 Indeed, You have made my days *as* handbreadths, And my age *is* as nothing before You; Certainly every man at his best state *is* but vapor. Selah

6 Surely every man walks about like a shadow; Surely they busy themselves in vain; He heaps up *riches*, And does not know who will gather them.

7 "And now, Lord, what do I wait for? My hope *is* in You.

8 Deliver me from all my transgressions; Do not make me the reproach of the foolish.

Friend flee to Christ, make him your one true hope, and then you will be truly rich and thirst no more forever.