

## Luke 12:13-21

Greed is the desire to have more when one already has enough. But what is enough? The one who is greedy never has enough. The one who is not greedy learns to be content with what he has. Would you agree that the man in the parable can be called greedy? His focus in life is storing away all his grain and goods so that he can take life easy and enjoy the best it has to offer. No wonder God calls him a fool. Aren't you glad that you are not like him?

But wait a second. Is it not true that this man in Jesus' parable is simply living the American Dream? He works hard and gains an abundance, so he makes plans for his future. He invests in bigger barns so that he can store all his capital and have a relaxing, enjoyable retirement.

Who among us doesn't want the same thing for ourself? Oh wait, maybe you're hoping to die in poverty? Maybe, unlike this man, you want the worst that life has to offer? And you have no thoughts of building a nest egg so that one day, like him, you can put your feet up and relax, eat, drink, and be merry? Who are we kidding? This man is us. And that's unsettling because since God calls him a fool, what does that make us?

Before we go any further, it's important for me to point out that God calls you His dear child. Baptized into Christ Jesus, God names you His forgiven, precious saint. And so you are not the man in the parable. This does not mean that we can ignore him and learn nothing from Jesus' parable. If this is what we choose to do, we are not as wise as we think we are.

You and I live in a materialistic society. We have much. But there is always more to have. Now we should not begrudge the abundance with which God blesses us. He created all things good. And woe to the preacher who tries to make his congregation feel guilty for making use of, and enjoying, the material things in this life. For such things are gifts of God.

But the danger is that what we have, or don't have but want, can throw our life off balance. To use an analogy, a chiropractor taught this to me... that our entire world lies in front of us. So our hands are always reaching forward...typing on a keyboard, texting on our phone, preparing and consuming meals. Pretty much everything we do, it's all out in front of us. This is why, he explained, I was having back and neck issues. I was always reaching forward, and this posture was putting a strain on my vertebrae. To counter this, he taught me to pause every now and then, when at my desk or on the keyboard, and stretch back, lifting up my head in the process. And, he said, for every one chest exercise I do, to do four or five back exercises.

Do you see the spiritual application? Our whole materialistic world lies in front of us. And what is material affects what is spiritual. Look at the man in the parable. He is consumed by the things of the world so that his posture is completely off kilter. What lies in front of him is material. What lies behind him is spiritual, for he turns his back on it. He lives as if God does not matter. He invests in his future life here on earth, but not in the life to come. We know this is true, for Jesus says of him that he *"lays up treasure for himself, but is not rich toward God."* This man's poor posture has gone on for so long that he isn't even aware of it. And God has had enough. *"Fool!"* He says, and the man dies in his sleep with no thought of repentance.

How is your posture? When a Christian is always reaching forward toward the things of this world, even though they are good things and blessings of God, what so easily happens is that the Christian's back becomes turned toward the Word and Sacraments. The process of laying up treasure for ourself, but not being rich toward God, creeps up on us slowly over time so that we aren't even aware of it. And when our posture is off kilter, our life not being in balance, we can easily become locked into this position.

It's not just those church members, here and everywhere, who are always reaching forward toward the things of the world and thus always turning their backs on the things of God, who are in grave danger. Every Christian is tempted in this way. Jesus' words here, "*Be on your guard,*" are a warning to all of us.

He was tempted just as we are. Satan put all the riches and glory of the world in front of Him. But our Lord would not turn His back on you. He strained forward; He reached for the cross because you were always in front of Him.

Is He our example in this? Obviously. But much more, He is our Savior. Jesus would not turn His back on your sins and mine. But He reached for them and accepted them as His own. And thus God declares you to be forgiven of them. All your sins are not yours anymore. Jesus embraced them, all of them, and everyone of you is forgiven.

He also embraced death. In the parable we're told that God said, "*Fool! This night your soul is required of you.*" God took it from him because the man was unwilling to let go of it. But not Jesus. His soul was not required of Him for He commended His soul to His Father in heaven. "*Father, into Thy hands*" He said as He died.

Your posture in life determines your posture in death. Your soul will not be required of you, not when you commit your soul, your body, and all that you have to the Lord. When this is the way you live, investing in the life to come, being rich toward God, you will not die like the man in the parable, but like Jesus. And like Him, you will be raised in the resurrection.

A word to parents and to young people. When a child matures and is ready to embrace life - getting a job, going to college, pursuing a career - their future lies before them. The whole world opens up to them. And they are especially vulnerable to temptation. How easy it is for them to turn their back on Sunday worship, on the Communion Table, on time spent in the Word of God, because their job, school, and career are in front of them. To such as these, and to all of us, Jesus gives this parable, warning us not to become the man who was a fool.

To live like a fool is to be a fool. This is why God calls you and me, and our young people, to live like the Christians we are. Your life is not what lies in front of you. Your life is Christ. And although we do not embrace Him as we should, He embraces you. He loves you and He does forgive you. Living as His dear child, you will not hear from Him when you die, "Fool!" but "*Come, blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you.*" Amen.