

## “Rejoice, His heart is with you!” Luke 12:13-21

Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” But he said to him, “Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?” 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.” And he told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich man produced plentifully, and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’ 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. And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.” But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

Now imagine that your reason is clouded, you can’t see or understand things clearly, therefore you are fooled and deceived into doing things that are harmful for you. You are led to live in a way that robs you of joy, that robs you of satisfaction, meaning, perhaps even relationships, friendships, community, and so on.

You are exposed and vulnerable to those who want to harm you. And... you are totally unaware that this is happening. Imagine! How does that sound? Awful! But... This is what our sinfulness does to us. This is our natural state. Of course, we do not usually feel that way! Remember... We are unaware of our miserable condition.

What a blessing it is, when we are made aware of sinfulness that keeps us captives, when our sin is exposed to the light, for then we have our chance, with God’s help to see again, to become wise, to be free, to regain what was lost, to reunite where we were separated. What a blessing, indeed!

Ideally, this would happen every Sunday, every sermon, or... your pastor is somewhat failing in his responsibilities. Topic of today's meditation hopefully will deliver to us just this sort of blessing, helping us to see what we may be unable to see. Because the finger of this parable of the Rich Fool is pointing at us.

Now, how would you answer this question? Where is your heart? To whom or to what does it belong? A few verses later Jesus says: **“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”** Otherwise put – follow the money, see where you spend it, and you will know where your heart truly is.

Luke provides for us the context of this little exchange that we heard today in our reading. Crowds were gathered around Jesus and He was teaching how precious we are to God our Father, how much He cares for us, that we don’t need to fear.

He was telling how important it is to keep the true faith and to confess it boldly, and promising that the Holy Spirit Himself will help us. Beautiful teaching of eternal significance, the words of eternal life from the Lord of life Himself. But then...

Suddenly someone in the crowd said: **“Teacher, tell my brother to give me my money!”** What... Why did he come to Jesus? Why do we? What do we expect from Him? In response to that inappropriate question, Jesus tells this parable.

In our Bibles it is called the parable of the Rich Fool. Don't you find this surprising? Maybe it is by a mistake? A fool? Why a fool? Isn't he the role model for all sensible people? Besides, quite an accomplished role model at that. Today he could easily be an inspirational speaker, sharing his success story and teaching others how to get out into early retirement. What was his story?

A rich guy, probably a clever businessman. He had done well, he was a high achiever, prosperous, and lucky on top of that. Now he had made it, he could retire early, enjoy his life. Drive his luxury or vintage cars, travel the world, feast and rejoice, post pictures on social media. Because he was so well off.

Why to call him a fool? Isn't this what most people dream about? Don't you want this? Honestly? Easy and prosperous life without worrying about money? Being able to devote your life to the pursuit of happiness and pleasures? The old Adam in me would delight in such a situation. Bring it on!

What Jesus said really kills all the fun and makes us feel bad. What most people hope for, dream about, toil for as a good and desirable life, Jesus calls it ... death. Yes, if that is all you have, all you value, all you strive for then you are dead already. You may not be dead physically yet, but... even that may happen this very night.

What can we learn from this parable? What is wrong with us? **“The land of a rich man produced plentifully, and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’ 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. And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.”**

Three quick points. **First, loneliness.** Community and conversations were everything in the Ancient Middle East. What about this man? With all his prosperity and luck, he didn't not have anyone to talk to. He was alone.

How sad it is when you have good news, when something wonderful happens in your life, when your joy is about to overflow, you want to share it, but... there is no one to share it with. No one. How sad...

But this is one of the effects that we witness in our society as well; we enjoy unprecedented prosperity as never before, and we also struggle with unprecedented levels of loneliness. It seems that our prosperity has eroded our ties with our fellow humans. Loneliness is what remains.

**Second, foolishness.** How else can we call the situation when someone believes that the answer to our deep longings is found in having more, being richer, having greater barns? On the other hand, don't we all believe it at least to some extent?

But if we only spend a few minutes reflecting, people usually come to the common-sense consensus that the most important things in our lives, those that are truly precious – they are all immaterial things.

To know that your life matters, to feel that your life is meaningful, that you serve a higher purpose, that you are loved, belong and are welcomed and accepted by your fellow humans, that you can be a blessing to others, that your contribution transforms your community and helps others to flourish; all people know that it is more satisfying to give than to receive, but ...

Still, this rich man had put all the eggs in that one basket; let's have more, more for me, more security. Which essentially meant less joy, less freedom, less meaning and less satisfaction as his whole focus was on himself. That is... foolishness.

**Third, blindness.** Even children know that we are not going to live forever. One day will be the last day of our lives here in this age. Yet, we have this built-in sense, that that is not it, there will be a continuation.

How blinded by our sin, greed, covetousness we need to be, to focus only on this life, only on this short time span, where we wither like grass. Yet, we read that that was the thinking of the rich fool: **"Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry."** How many think the same way?

How many of us believe the same lies; if only we have ample goods laid up for many years, then we can relax, eat, drink and pursue our ever-eluding happiness. But this very night your soul may be required from you. From each one of us!

**"Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."** Dear Lord, help us against our blindness, help us against our foolishness, renew and restore us!

What if the Spirit of the Lord transformed our hearts? What if instead of gathering for ourselves, storing in our barns and bank accounts and ever worrying how to make sure not to lose what we have gathered - what if instead we measured our lives in how much we have given?

This goes for both, for us as individuals and as congregations. What if we competed in how much our generosity has benefited the body of Christ, in how much we have contributed so that the Gospel can be shared with those who have never heard it locally and abroad? What if that was our focus?!

Imagine, how that would change our lives?! **"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."** What benefit do we have if we have wealth stored to secure our future for many years but are not rich toward God?! Where is your heart?

But... Do you know where Jesus' heart is? Where His treasure is, that is where His heart is as well. Where is His treasure? You are His treasure. You. Yes, each one of you. You are Jesus' treasure, and this is where His heart is – with you!

He had everything, literary everything. Except for one thing that mattered for Him the most. His greatest treasure. You. This is why He left everything, His divine glory, His divine splendour, He emptied Himself and became one of us.

He didn't ask: "Should I play it safe, who knows what may go wrong." Jesus Christ, the Son of God went all in, He committed Himself, with all He is and all He has, to pursue His greatest treasure, for that is where His heart was.

He didn't hold back, and He was overjoyed even before He went to the cross. He was overjoyed for He knew that His sacrifice, whatever painful and unbearable it may be, will give Him what He desired the most – you, your love, your gratitude, your company, your fellowship already here and forever in His New Creation.

Are we afraid to appear unreasonable if we don't store things for ourselves? Do we fear what may happen if we listen to Jesus and treat what He has given to us as His, where we are simply to act as His stewards?

That's okay. I fear... I do. This is why Jesus gently speaks to us: **"Fear not, my little flock, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on. Life is more than food, and the body more than clothing.**

**Consider the ravens: they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! Or 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. But if God so clothes the grass... how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! Your Father knows that you need; seek his kingdom first, and all these things will be added to you."**

We can't change where our hearts are attached. Especially if we are unaware of those attachments. That is far beyond our capabilities. But our Triune God can, as He comes to you and sends His Spirit to renew our hearts.

Remember! You are God's treasure, He knows what you need, He has promised to provide for you. What may hold us back? What may blind us to the Father's love? What may rob us of the joy of giving, sharing, supporting? Our sin?

But Jesus has taken care of that as well. If we are willing to let it go, He is willing to take it from us and give us new hearts. Let's pray that neither our sin, nor covetousness, nor greed, nor stinginess may blind us and make us rich fools.

May the Word and Spirit of our God enlighten us and free us to be those beautiful and generous creatures that our Lord created us to be, not rich fools but rich in good works. And may your heart find rest with the One who looks at you as His greatest treasure, with our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.