

Series: Parables: Did You Hear That?
Message Title: ***The Parable of the Self-Storage Addict***
Date: Sunday, August 26, 2018
Scripture: Luke 12:13-21
Speaker: David H. McKinley
Location: Warren Baptist Church, Augusta, GA

Introduction

One of the fastest growing and ever expanding industries in United States is self-storage (mini-storage). It is primarily a United States based industry.

Industry experts often refer to the “Four D’s of Life” when discussing why storage space is rented: death, divorce, downsizing, dislocation. The latter can refer to either the renter relocating to another area and needing space to store items until they can be moved to the new location or a subsequent marriage resulting in the couple having duplicate items.

As of 2018, over 52,000 self-storage facilities have been developed in the United States on industrial and commercial land parcels. There is more than 2.3 billion square feet of available self-storage in space in U.S.—a land area equivalent to three times the size

of Manhattan Island under roof. This industry is estimated to be worth 38 billion this year—a good business to be in and an ever expanding market of need.

Although there is historical evidence of publicly available storage in ancient China, modern self-storage facilities (in which the tenant has exclusive access to the storage space) did not begin to appear until the late 1960s. The first self-storage facility chains opened in Texas.

I cite this industry because we are going to learn something about life from a “self-storage addict” in the first century. We meet him in Luke 12:

“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" (Luke 12:13-21 ESV).

This is not a sermon against the use of self-storage. It's a good business, especially to the military community.

Background

Jesus had been teaching about fear and faith. Open air conversations were common. Rabbis often used forums to get opinion, observation and leverage; the court of public opinion was powerful. Some date this practice back to Moses (Exodus 18) where he would "judge between the people."

A man suddenly interrupted and challenged Jesus to help him with an issue of injustice.

This man's brother wasn't giving him his fair share—yes, a family feud, sibling rivalry, and squabbles over inheritance. "I am entitled to more!"

Jesus asked him why he brought this issue to him. "I'm not a judge or arbitrator." So many want to focus on the "Justice Jesus" and not the "Lord Jesus."

Rather than play the role of a lawyer, Jesus picked up a scalpel like a surgeon and spoke to the issue of this man's heart. In so doing, Jesus engages in an issue that reflects the disease of the hearts of many in America and the western world of our day—the heart's desire to acquire (possessions)!



A Sermon in a Sentence

Jesus makes an incredibly profound statement with far reaching implications for us even today, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Luke 12:15 ESV).

Jesus makes a truth-statement in a Tweetable package. You can repeat and remember the entire sermon today in this one sentence. Did you hear that?

So much of life for all of us is defined by our identity and our security. Our happiness is driven by our possessions and passion for more. We think acquisitions make for an abundant life. Not just money!

Eve coveted forbidden fruit to make her like God. Lot's wife coveted Sodom. Achan coveted spoils of war, and took and hid forbidden items in his tent. This action later destroyed his entire family. David coveted Bathsheba.

St. Francis of Assisi once said, "Men have confessed to me every known sin but that of covetousness."

Jesus is pointing to this embittered brother and his covetous heart as if to say, "Getting what you think you are entitled to will not bring the security, significance or satisfaction you crave."

A Story and With Grave Consequence

See Luke 12:16-21.

The yields were so great and the return coming in so fast, the man could not put it all away fast enough. Like a bullish stock market, he was making money while sleeping. We don't know his name, but we know he is well off—increased wealth increased questions and challenges. Nothing can make you as insecure as insane income and profits (today's young athletes and lottery winners?).

He "thought to himself" because he was thinking about himself. There are 16 references to "I" and "my"—totally self-absorbed with his money, his profits and his possessions.

His life consisted of the things he possessed because they possessed him. His life was preoccupied by and consumed with stuff!

One of the most dangerous traps of life is "if" or "when" or "then" thinking.

In this case, the man had so much great stuff, he needed other stuff to help him care for

this stuff and the stuff he is still anticipating acquiring in the future. He is even starting to feel a little invincible—"I will." He is not only ambitious, he now has the smell of arrogance.

Some read and misinterpret this parable to mean that ambition is wrong. Not so. Ambition is a strong desire to achieve something; it is a powerful motivation if it is directed toward a proper goal.

"In all toil there is profit, but mere talk tends only to poverty" (Proverbs 14:23 ESV).

Paul was one of the most ambitious men in the Bible. For many years, he had religious zeal and ambition to destroy the church—persecutor. But then He met Jesus, and Paul's ambition changed—no less present, but the intent and practice is seen:

"But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I

may gain Christ... Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me His own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:7-8, 12-14 ESV).

This is real, raw and rugged ambition, but all toward the pursuit of Christ.

God’s goal for your life is not passivity; it is intensity driven toward the things of God and not the goods and gains of this world.

Why is this so important? A major miscalculation! This man was counting on what he would have coming in, but failed to think about how fast he might be going out. It’s tragic when we spend too much time planning on things we want to achieve or acquire while failing to account for a future that is beyond our control or calculation.

“Fool.” This is such strong language. It describes someone who is tricked, deceived and gullible. This man is not a professing atheist, but he was a practicing one.

The man focused on how many self-storage units he would need, but failed to think about how much greater his need was for the shelter of God in life.

Life is a series of trade-offs. He traded off faith for financial prosperity. He traded off eternal security for temporal acquisitions. He traded his identity for idolatry.

There’s a Spanish proverb that says, “There are no pockets in a shroud.” Our modern phrase is this: “There are no U-Hauls behind hearses.”

See Luke 12:21—such a powerful punch line to this story. He was rich toward himself, but not rich toward God. Self-storage on earth can mean empty seats in heaven.

A Summary That Brings Security (and Satisfaction)

This man's energy was consumed with efforts to gain security on earth.

"A rich man's wealth is his strong city, and like a high wall in his imagination" (Proverbs 18:11 ESV).

But if you will let this go and find your security in God, you will have both eternal treasure and temporal peace.

"Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain" (Psalm 127:1 ESV).

"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. For life is **more than** food, and the body more than clothing'" (Luke 12:22-23 ESV).

"More than" is the contrast to the "not consist of" in Luke 12:15.

This is a powerful appeal to us all to get on the right side of possessions.

For wisdom regarding prosperity, security and eternity:

“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, 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! And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, seek His kingdom, and these things will be added to you. Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Luke 12:27-34 ESV).

• Repent of the idolatrous practice of covetousness.

“Little faith” issue is one of scandal toward God. We worship our possessions rather than the Provider. This is idolatrous.

“Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming” (Colossians 3:5-6 ESV).

- **Rejoice in what God has given you.**

You may say, “I’m not rich; I’ve been given little.” Really? Don’t be like Israel—often forgetting God and overlooking His kindness and mercy, then soon pouting and complaining about being entitled to more.

We start looking around and comparing ourselves with what others have and forget to look at what God has given you. Give thanks!

See 1 Thessalonians 5:18.

“Faith in Jesus Christ enriches us by giving us the blessings of forgiveness, peace, holiness and heaven, and good works, wrought as the outcome of gratitude for these blessings,

enrich us with present happiness and future reward. These are things which the world cannot give or take away. These are things which are the possessions, of our soul, and of which death cannot deprive us." —William Taylor

God is your Provider. He sees. He knows. He cares about you.

- **Return to God what belongs to God.**

"Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine" (Proverbs 3:9-10 ESV).

I can't help but wonder about this parallel given Jesus' reference to Solomon in Luke 12:24, 27. It's an issue of your blessings in heaven = "barns (storage units) on earth

"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" (1 Timothy 6:17 ESV).

The greatest security is not the yield of your crops or your stocks, but your yieldness and dependence upon God.

• **Risk a “trade-off” of future return through present restraint.**

See Luke 12:34. Get your heart in heaven!

“If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory” (Colossians 3:1-4 ESV).