



# THE COMPASS

RED HILL LUTHERAN CHURCH

The Compass:  
*Encounter-Examine-Explore-Embrace* God's Word  
On  
Your Discipleship Path

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Sermon Series: "Fully Engaged."  
(Pentecost, 2025)  
"Valuing the Eternal." *Luke 12.13-21.*

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☐ **Day #1—Monday, August 4<sup>th</sup>. Read: Luke 12:13-14. —Encounter: God's Word and your life—What do you Hear and/or See?**

In Luke chapter 12, Jesus' emphasis falls upon the virtues that disciples of Jesus are to develop and strengthen. In our Gospel lesson from yesterday, we looked at not being diverted from our commitment to Jesus by a wrong understanding of material possessions and who really "owns" our lives. Jesus tells us that true wealth in life is found in avoiding three common mistakes. The alternative to these mistakes is "*Being rich toward God.*"

Jesus was commonly regarded as a *teacher*, or Rabbi (which means "teacher"), and thus a member of a class which dealt with both religious and civil matters. It is not surprising then, that His opinion was sought in a legal dispute over property. A man in the crowd interrupts Jesus and asked Him to solve a family problem. Possibly a younger brother was claiming that he was being defrauded of his share in an inheritance. Jesus, however, refused to settle the concern of His questioner in order to get to the *heart of the matter*—which was a *matter of the heart*! As long as both men were *greedy*, no settlement would be satisfactory (the "you" in Luke 12:14 is *plural*).

Their greatest need was to have their hearts changed. Note, the questioner does not ask for arbitration and there is no evidence that his brother was willing for that either. The man wants a decision by Jesus against his brother. The Jewish law (*Deuteronomy 21:17*) proscribed that two-thirds of family wealth and/or possessions would go to the elder brother in a family, and one-third to the younger siblings. This man, like many people today, wants Jesus to serve them but not to save them. This is similar to the Martha and Mary narrative when Martha demanded (not requested) that Jesus tell Mary to help her with all the serving.

In this dialogue, Jesus goes to the root of the matter by giving a stern warning against greed or, as some of the older Bible translations have it, *covetousness*. Covetousness is the desire to have more than one actually has, which often flows from envy for other people's possessions. Covetousness is an unquenchable thirst for getting more and more of something we think we need in order to be truly satisfied. It may be a thirst for money or the things that money can buy, or even a thirst for position and power. Covetousness, or greed, not only leads to strife; it also expresses a fundamentally flawed attitude toward life, an attitude that defines "possessions" as all that really matters. Relatedly, there is a fundamental misunderstanding of who "owns" the wealth that is so desired. As the old saying goes, "money cannot buy everything;" it cannot even buy what is most necessary for human flourishing: a relationship with God and with others.

**Consider/Reflect:** When have you been like the man in the parable? Is there an area in your life where greed or covetousness, is a problem for you?

☐ **Day #2—Tuesday, August 5<sup>th</sup>. Read: Luke 12:15. —Examine: The Text and its Context.**

Jesus made it clear that true life does not depend on an abundance of possessions. While God does not deny that we have certain basic needs (*Matthew 6:32; 1 Timothy 6:17*), God wants us to know (and live!) that we will not make life richer by acquiring *more* possessions. Mark Twain once defined "civilization" as "a limitless multiplication of unnecessary necessities." In fact, many Christians are infected with covetousness and do not know it. They think that Paul's admonition in *1 Timothy 6*

applies only to the “rich and famous.” Measured by the living standards of the rest of the world, most believers in America are indeed wealthy people.

The rich man had failed to gain the *true riches* of a right relationship with God—one step towards which would certainly be through giving to the poor (*Luke 12:33*). Thus, he was a fool; a godless and therefore a senseless person (we will discuss “foolishness” further on Thursday).

Verse 15 suggests that Jesus turned His remarks to the crowd surrounding Him and not just to the questioner; I.e. “Then he said to them, ‘Watch out!’” Greed was not just the problem of Jesus’ questioner alone, greed and covetousness affects all people. As there are “many” who struggle with greed, there are many ways to be a greedy person. Jesus points to this when He warned against “all kinds of greed.” People can be greedy with money, love, friendship, talents and abilities. Often, greed leads to even more “public” sins such as robbery, burglary, cheating, and broken relationships.

Again, this was the reason that Jesus refused to become involved with the man and his brother. Jesus exposed the underlying issues knowing full well that a legal judgment would not resolve the greed or the anger in the brothers’ relationship. Jesus affirms what is at the heart of biblical teaching: *God comes before all else in a person’s life*. God is the giver of all gifts—even our possessions!

**Consider/Reflect:** Greed, like idolatry (which is so very close in human experience), puts the gifts ahead of the Giver. Jesus’ point was that life does not consist in having many possessions. Possessions are to be enjoyed and used; they are not to be worshiped and/or trusted! The Biblical character Job knew deep in his soul: “The Lord ‘giveth’ and the Lord ‘taketh away’—blessed be the name of the Lord!”

**□ Day #3—Wednesday, August 6<sup>th</sup>. Read: Luke 12:16-18. —Explore: The background to this text(s).**

To explain this profound truth about the battle with greed and covetousness, Jesus tells a parable about a rich man and his understanding about where real treasure comes from. Jesus told this parable to reveal the dangers that lurk in a covetous heart. As you read it, test your own responses to this rich man’s various experiences. How do you respond to the wealthy man’s dilemma? (“I need more storage for more “stuff!”) Here was a man who had a problem with too much wealth! If we say, “I certainly wish I had that problem!” we may be revealing covetousness in our hearts. If suddenly you inherited a great deal of wealth, would it create a problem for you? On the other hand, would you simply praise God and ask Him what He wanted you to do with it?

The rich man was so concerned with his wealth and possessions that he continued to build bigger and bigger barns to store all his grain and goods. His attitude was that he would have an easy life because he had everything he could possibly want or need. God’s response in the parable contradicted that idea! When the rich man died all of his wealth and goods could do NOTHING for him! They would simply pass on to someone else. (See also *1 Timothy 6:6-10*; *James 1:10*). Luke himself will return to this subject of wealth in chapter 16.

The Bible is very clear: There are many dangers pursuant to wealth and the “stuff” of the world. (*Proverbs 30:7-9*). Wealth can choke the Word of God (*Matthew 13:22*), create snares and temptations (*1 Timothy 6:6-10, 17-19*), and gives a false sense of security. You have likely heard it said: “money does not satisfy,” meaning of course that money cannot buy love, true relationships, and deep meaning in life. However, perhaps it is better understood that wealth/possessions does *satisfy for a season—if you want to live on that level*. It is very paradoxical: People who are satisfied only with the “things” that money can buy are in great danger of losing the “things” that money cannot buy (relationship, joy, peace, etc.) There is always more to be achieved and owned if God is not put first in human living.

This farmer saw his wealth as an opportunity to please himself. He had no thoughts of others or of God. I have heard it said that this rich man had a “vision” problem; his focus was all “I” (“eye”—vision—get it ☺) Here it is: “He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place...This is what I’ll do...I will tear down my barns...and there I will store all my grain and my goods...And I’ll say to myself...You have plenty of good things...” Wow! No mention of God, other people who helped him achieve his wealth, and no mention of giving or sharing in any way.

Herein lay the challenge: do we treat our possessions as God’s possessions first? Do we believe that our wealth is God’s wealth and we are here to manage that wealth responsibly and faithfully, in a way that glorifies God? This is the bottom line (to use a financial metaphor!); do we love God and use things or love things and use God?

**Consider/Reflect:** What do you value most in your life? What is the relationship between these “valuables” and Jesus? Do you see your “valuables” as gifts from God?

□ **Day #4--Thursday, August 7<sup>th</sup>. Read: Luke 12:19-20. — Explore: The background to this text(s).**

The irony: The rich man thought he had life “made,” he had a great life! However, human life was not intended to be “made” or to be based upon riches. Life is a gift from God and to be lived for God. One day, God will “limit” our lives. We will die. The man had success, satisfaction, and security! What more could he want?” Nevertheless, Jesus did not describe this man enjoying life; He described him facing death! Wealth cannot keep us alive when our time comes to die, nor can it buy back the opportunities we missed while we were thinking of ourselves and ignoring God and others.

Jesus made it clear that true life does not come from an abundance of things, nor does true success or security. The rich man had a false view of both life and death. He thought that life came from accumulating things, and that death was far away. His life was under his control. He decides that now he can “take life easy; eat, drink, and be merry.” He was, according to Jesus (and God in the parable) a “fool.” Foolishness in the scriptures usually refers to those who refuse to live according to biblical principles.

The Greek word for “fool” is “*aphron*,” defined as “one who rejects knowledge.” This rich man *willfully* ignores God’s principles for living life. He is thus called a “fool” because he believed that a life of accumulation and only earthly enjoyment is the summit of human endeavor. His prosperity, and the self-aggrandizement that was the result, seemed to be aim of his life. He had nothing else to achieve, nothing else to give himself to something beyond himself. This rich man’s foolishness was similar to what we term today, secular humanism. Secular humanism is *secular*, because there is no mention of God, and *humanism*, because in absence of any mention of God, the *human being* becomes the center of all things. Secular humanism is the perfect description of Martin Luther’s definition of sin. Luther (along with Augustine) said that sin is “*The self-turned in on the self.*”

Biblical foolishness is not stupidity, it is rebellion. It is knowing what is true but choosing to ignore the truth. Most human beings know that life and death are beyond our control. However, this does not stop people from believing that we can (and should) control life and death. The greatest tragedy, and one that Jesus warns against here, is not what the man left behind but what lay *before* him: an eternity without God! The man lived without God and died without God, and his wealth was but an incident in his life. God is not impressed with our money. We will only take two “things” with us to the judgment day. The first is “us.” You take you (or better, God takes you) into the presence of God. The second is our relationship with Jesus. Every human being will take the first “thing,” only those who know Jesus bring the second “thing.”

**Consider/Reflect:** “Jesus underlines the great danger of being rich in earthly things but poor toward God. In a consumer culture, the dangers of covetousness are often downplayed; in fact, some even try to make greed a virtue. In love for us, however, Jesus warns us against the self-destructive nature of covetousness and gives us new hearts, which He, the very source of life and goodness, fills with joyful satisfaction through the Gospel. [Pray]: Heavenly Father, keep my eyes from becoming envious and my heart from self-destructive greed. Move me to find satisfaction in Your promises and to trust that You will more than provide for me and my loved ones. Amen.”<sup>1</sup>

□ **Day #5— Friday, August 8<sup>th</sup>. Read: Luke 12:18-20. —Explore: The background to this text(s).**

How then should possessions be regarded? In the next section, *Luke 12:22ff*, Jesus tells us that we should not worry about food and clothing (the two essential requirements for the body) as if they were the most important things. The real *person* is more important. If God feeds even the birds and clothes the flowers, surely He will all the more provide what is necessary for His children. In any case, worry cannot make a person live any longer. In a world in which people are set on an never-ending treadmill of constant acquisition and achievement, hoping for “the” answer that will give peace and contentment, Jesus commands His disciples (you) to seek first God’s will and his ways; then we will find that our bodily needs are taken care of. We may be even so bold as to sell our possessions and give to the needy, while setting our desires on a *heavenly treasure* that will not pass away!

Does such teaching seem to encourage laziness and/or a lack of concern about the practicalities of everyday living—a “God will provide; consequently I do not need to do anything mindset?” Is this what Jesus is teaching here? No! Jesus is not talking to lazy people but to worried people, and to those who are tempted to jump on the treadmill! Trust in God is the beginning of any work, achievement, and desire. If we trust God first and always, our priorities will usually be in proper order.

<sup>1</sup> *The Lutheran Study Bible* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009).

Being “rich toward God” necessarily means to acknowledge *thankfully* that everything we have (the gifts) comes from God (the Giver), and then make an effort to use what God gives for the good of others and His glory. Again, all of God’s gifts (wealth, possessions, and relationships) can be *enjoyed* and *employed* at the same time if our purpose is to honor God (*1 Timothy 6:10ff*). To be rich toward God means spiritual enrichment, not just personal enjoyment. How tragic when people are rich in this world but poor in the next! (*Matthew 6:19–34*).

Even though Jesus’ teaching on worry is dealt with at length in the following verses (*vs.22-34*), it will be helpful to end this week with Jesus’ warning about wealth and the natural consequences of putting wealth and greed in first place in one’s life: It leads to worry, self-occupation, and bondage. The rich farmer worried because he had *too much*. At the same time, people can be tempted to worry because they do not *have enough*! Today and tomorrow, we will look at three dangers of worry. Today, danger one...

Worry is destructive. Our English word *worry* comes from an old Anglo-Saxon word that means, “To strangle.” “Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow,” said Corrie Ten Boom; “it empties today of its strength.”

**Consider/Reflection:** What do you worry about? Pray about that this today. How does your worry effect your relationship with Jesus? Does it bring you *closer* or *further away*?

☐ **Day #6-Saturday, August 9<sup>th</sup>. Read: Luke 12:21.—Embrace: God and His guiding you through His Word.**

We conclude this week with two final thoughts on worry and the consequences of greed and covetousness.

Worry is deceptive. Worry gives us a false view of life, of worry itself, and of God. Worry convinces us that life is made up of what we eat and what we wear. We get so concerned about *the means* that we totally forget about *the end*, which is to glorify God (*Matthew 6:33*). There is a great difference between making a living and making a life. Worry blinds us to the world around us and the way God cares for His creation. God cares for His kids *to whom He has given the ability to work*. Just to be clear once again: Jesus was not suggesting that we sit around and let God feed us, for the birds themselves work hard to stay alive.

Rather, He encourages us to trust Him and cooperate with Him in using the abilities and opportunities that He gives us (*2 Thessalonians 3:6–15*). In *Luke 12:25*, Jesus pointed out that our worries do not add one extra minute to our lives (*Psalms 39:5*) or one extra inch to our height. The rich farmer’s fretting certainly did not lengthen his life! Instead of adding to our lives, our worries take away from our lives. People can worry themselves into the hospital or into the grave!

Worry is de-formative. Finally, worry keeps us from growing spiritually and it renders Christians “practical atheists.” Deep in our “worried hearts,” we are doubting that God will care for us. Or, honestly, we worry that God will not care for us in the way we want to be cared for! Conversely, what greater witness could we have to the unbelieving world than enjoying a *worry-free, trust-full* life that is dependent upon God? How do we win over worry? The first step is to realize that God knows our needs and we can trust Him to meet them!

If it is His pleasure to give us His kingdom, will He not also give us everything that we need (*Romans 8:32*)? The main question is this: “Where is your heart?” If our hearts are fixed on the transient things of this world, then we will always worry. However, if our hopes are fixed on the eternal things of our Heavenly Father, then God’s peace will guard our minds and hearts (*Philippians 4:6–9*). When we are “rich toward God,” we own “things” rather than the “things” owning us!

**Consider/Reflection:** What changes would be required for you to be “rich toward God?”