

**Heart & Treasure** 11-12-17  
**Luke 12:13-34**

We read this morning the words of our Lord, our Master, and our Savior. It is good as we read and ponder these words, that we remember who said them. Luke 12:**13-24** *Someone in the crowd said to Him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.” 14 But He said to him, “Man, who appointed Me a judge or arbitrator over you?” 15 Then He said to them, “Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.” 16 And He told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich man was very productive. 17 And he began reasoning to himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?’ 18 Then he said, ‘This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.”’ 20 But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?’ 21 So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.” 22 And He said to His disciples, “For this reason I say to you, do not worry about your life, as to what you will eat; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. 23 For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. 24 Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap; they have no storeroom nor barn, and yet God feeds them; how much more valuable you are than the birds! Then go to verse 29. **29-34** Do not seek what you will eat and what you will drink, and do not keep worrying. 30 For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek; but your Father knows that you need these things. 31 But seek His kingdom, and these things will be added to you. 32 Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom. 33 “Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves money belts which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near nor moth destroys. 34 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

In Luke 12 Jesus is speaking to thousands. Somewhere in the crowd were two brothers who were involved in an inheritance dispute and had come to Jesus for a solution. People can get very nasty when settling inheritances, even with their own family. Why? Because money is on the line. The backdrop of this teaching of Jesus is the quarrelling that

greed often produces. Jesus didn't see himself as called to settle family disputes but he did use the request as a platform for some valuable instruction. He tells the story of the rich fool, but that's just part of what Jesus said. Our Lord is teaching us about money, about possessions about values, about greed.

He starts with a warning in **15** *Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.*” Jesus says, *Beware!* And He says it with emphasis, quickly adding, *be on your guard.* He is trying to keep us from danger. Greed is such an enormous problem for us and we are wise to be on the alert. I Timothy 6:**9-10** *those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.* So, do you feel the tension, are you alert to the war between money-lust and devotion to Christ. Money lust or greed is so much more appealing to our natural appetites isn't it? Look at children. Are they naturally generous or grabby? Paul said that we are all used to live by fleshly lusts, indulging our desires. But, if you take a poll asking, “Are you a greedy person?” how many would answer, “Yes?” Very few. We think other people are greedy. We think greed is the other guy's problem, like the man in our story. *Tell my greedy brother to give me my fair share.* Jesus knows better. He knows this is a problem for us all and He says, *Beware!*

Humanity hasn't changed with regard to this, but if anything our culture makes the danger and the problem much worse. We are exposed to so much advertising designed to hit us right where we are. Have you noticed how the internet does this? If you call for a quote on car insurance, suddenly, Facebook and YouTube and whatever other sites you visit are providing you with insurance ads. Recently, a man told me he had a fight with his wife and his screens were blitzed with ads for divorce attorneys. Somehow they know! So, beware of the seductions toward greed that come from within you, and from outside of you.

To help us with this, Jesus, as He often does, tells a story – the parable of the rich fool, which teaches that material possessions, things, riches are not what life is all about. **15d** *Not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.* Riches are not where it's at. That is the point of the parable and the point is made in three ways, with three arguments. All three of these are found in our text, and, interestingly in the fifth chapter of the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes.

First of all, He says, material possessions should not be your pursuit because they are too fragile, too uncertain. You never know if you will have them tomorrow. In the parable the man loses his goods by death. He is removed from his possessions. But, it is just as often happens the other way. **33** *Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves money belts which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near nor moth destroys.* That last part points out the weakness of earthly treasure. It can be stolen. It can be lost by disaster or by error. Ecclesiastes 5:**13-14** *There is a grievous evil which I have seen under the sun: riches being hoarded by their owner to his hurt. 14 When those riches were lost through a bad investment and he had fathered a son, then there was nothing to support him.* Material goods also get attached by termites or by rust. Investments can get decimated by inflation or changing economies. What happened to people who held stock in 1929? Crash! It all came to an end. The same thing happened for silver investors in 1980. Building your life around possessions is foolish first of all because these things are fragile. We kid ourselves by calling them “securities.” Rather a sad joke. We name our investment companies, Prudential, Fidelity, to make them sound solid. The term I like is this one – “broker.” Someone who helps you go broke. Who came up with that? At least it is honest. I Timothy 6:**17** *Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. God is sure, changeless and forever. Your money, which nowadays is just numbers on a computer screen, is not.*

Then Jesus points out that material possessions are not able to satisfy a person made in God’s image. They aren’t. If you are counting on things and riches to make you happy you are asking them to do something they were never meant to do. Wise Solomon wrote this in Ecclesiastes 5:**10** *He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves abundance with its income. This too is vanity.* Why isn’t he satisfied with money? He always wants more. An old Romans proverb said, *Money is like sea-water, the more you drink, the thirstier you become.* Listen again to King Solomon. Ecclesiastes 2:**4-8** *I enlarged my works: I built houses for myself, I planted vineyards for myself; 5 I made gardens and parks for myself and I planted in them all kinds of fruit trees; 6 I made ponds of water for myself from which to irrigate a forest of growing trees. 7 I bought male and female slaves and I had homeborn slaves. Also I possessed flocks and herds larger than all who preceded me in Jerusalem. 8 Also, I collected for myself silver and gold and the*

*treasure of kings and provinces. I provided for myself male and female singers and the pleasures of men—many concubines.* Wow! Here's a guy who had it all! His report is in verse **11** (NIV) *Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.* I don't know about you but I have heard hundreds of testimonies like this, from those who had all that money could buy. They agree with Solomon. Riches do not satisfy. Why don't we believe them? The news is filled with reports of wealthy people and their miseries, their misconduct, their divorces, their depression, their drug addictions. Is there nothing to learn from all that?

For us, who have the word of God, we don't have to depend on the myriad of testimonies to this effect. God's word tells us what a human being is – one made in the image of his Maker to worship Him, to know Him, to honor Him. We are far more than material. So, the sensual pleasures of this world can never fulfill. This is the error of the rich fool. **19** *I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry."* To whom did he say that? His soul. But his soul can't eat his bread or drink his wine or lie on his bed and grow fat. If this were a hog saying this it would make sense. The life of a hog is all about eating, drinking, sleeping. To a hog that is paradise. That's hog heaven because that fits a hog's nature – but not a man's. A man is made for nobler things. Augustine, the one we call *Saint*, was a debauched sensualist, a womanizer who one day, after meeting Jesus wrote, *Oh Lord, you have made us for yourself and our hearts are ever restless until they find their rest in You.* If so, material possessions just will not satisfy.

The third point Jesus makes against the pursuit of possessions is that they are ultimately useless. They are ultimately useless and by the word "ultimate" I point you to the realities of death and eternity. There was a wealthy man in California who requested that when he died he be buried sitting inside his Cadillac, with a 3-piece suit, holding a \$30 cigar and in California they did it. So here they were lowering this dead man and his Cadillac into a huge grave when the crane operator is overheard to say, "Man, that's really livin." The sheer insanity of our society where some will wear T-shirts declaring, *He who dies with the most toys wins.* Tony Campolo tells of going on a bus tour through Chicago and the tour guide pointed out the place in that city where the famous gangster John Dillinger was shot and killed. He said that Dillinger had robbed from banks millions of

dollars but when he died he only had 32 cents left. Upon hearing this Campolo's daughter was heard to say in an audible voice, "What great timing!" Think about that. Who wants to die when you still have a million bucks left? We think it's an awful thing to die penniless, but what Campolo's daughter saw is that your money does you no good when you die. Proverbs 11:**4a** *Riches do not profit in the day of wrath.* Years ago I had a guy come to my house to sell me a burial plot. Have you ever gone through that? Well, this fella looked at me and said, "Mr. Hendley, are you ready to die?" And I'm thinking, "Hey, Buddy, that's my line." But he asked, "Are you ready to die?", as if a contract with his funeral home would make me ready. Come on! When you lay on your death bed will you regret not having bought that boat, or that car, or that stereo? Do you think you will regret the investments you made in your church? In world missions? Consider what eternity says about your money. **20** *God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?'* The rich man's barns left him unprepared for death. Ecclesiastes 5:**15-16** *As he had come naked from his mother's womb, so will he return as he came. He will take nothing from the fruit of his labor that he can carry in his hand. 16 This also is a grievous evil—exactly as a man is born, thus will he die. So what is the advantage to him who toils for the wind?* The answer is "nothing" if he keeps it for himself. It's ultimately useless. 11:**4a** *Riches do not profit in the day of wrath.* If you don't learn it now you will learn it then. A wise older man asked an ambitious youngster what he was going to do in life. The young man said, *I will learn a profession.* "And then?" *I will set up my business.* "And then?" *I will make my fortune.* "And then?" *I will grow up, retire and live on my money.* "And then?" *Well, I suppose that one day I will die.* "And then?" came the last stabbing question. That last question exposes the inadequacy of the previous answers. It shatters the materialist who lives for only this world. The lesson of Jesus and the rich fool is that money and things are ultimately useless. The point of the parable is that material possessions are not what life is all about. *Not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.*

We've seen the warning Jesus gives and the lesson He teaches, now let's figure out what to do with it. How shall we respond? You may think of more, but I offer three to consider. First is to flee the sin of greed. Flee it. Vigorously avoid letting money get a grip on your soul. The world and the devil provide an array of methods to destroy your soul, but in my experience the three most popular involve intoxicants, illicit sex and riches. If you

elude those three you have gone a long way toward preserving your heart for God. Flee these temptations! And frustrate the devil! I Timothy 6:**9-10** *those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.* Now notice the next verse **11a** *But flee from these things.* You flee from things that are scary. Money isn't the scary thing. What is the scary thing? What is it that can ruin your soul? It is the love of money. Money-lust is destructive. I fear it. We should all fear it if we value our relationship with God because Jesus told us we can't serve two masters. And when we fear something we take steps to keep it away. What have you done to keep greed away? Do you place restrictions around your spending? Do you set ambitious objectives for giving? If you recognize a struggle in this area who have you asked, who will you ask, to hold you accountable in this area, by speaking to you about extravagance and excess, by helping you keep your conscience sharp, by reminding you to flee the sins of greed.

A second application is to value the spiritual and eternal above the material and temporal. It is not the desire of Jesus to put down material things. In this life, they matter. We are to work to obtain them and be wise in how we use them. Our problem is that we don't value supremely the spiritual and eternal. In that last verse we looked at I Timothy 6:**11a** *But flee from these things, you man of God.* Then look at the rest of the verse. **11b** *Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness.* Those last six nouns tell us what our hearts should pursue. I Timothy 6:18 says of the rich, **18** (ESV) *They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share.* Rich in good works. Wow! That is a great kind of wealth obtainable not by stockpiling but by dispersing. A life of giving – that, according to the Lord is “really living.”

Then there is this other amazing reality, that when we give we are setting ourselves up for some greater honor in the life to come. Jesus talks about an unfailing treasure in heaven. I don't understand all that. I think I mostly believe Him, but it embarrasses me how little I am motivated by that. Does it bother you too? How little the promise of heavenly treasure influences your thinking and effects your giving? God help us, our faith, our thoughts of eternity are so weak and flimsy. G. Campbell Morgan said this around a century ago: *You are to remember with the passion burning within you that you are not the child of today. You are not of the earth, you are more than dust; you are the child of*

*tomorrow, you are of the eternities, you are the offspring of deity. The measurements of your lives cannot be circumscribed by the point where blue sky kisses green earth. All the fact of your life cannot be encompassed in the one small sphere upon which you live. You belong to the infinite. If you make your fortune on earth – poor, sorry, silly soul – you have made a fortune, and stored it in a place where you cannot hold it. Make your fortune, but store it where it will greet you in the dawning of the new morning.*

Our third application points us to one way to lay up heavenly treasure. Give. Specifically, invest your money and your things in the purposes of Christ Jesus. This is what the Lord means when He says to **33** *Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves money belts which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven.* This verse is not properly understood to mean you shouldn't save your money or store up for potential hard times ahead. That is wise, not greedy. The problem with the rich fool was in his thinking, his reasons for storing up and in his totally self-absorbed attitude. When he had extra it never occurred to him to share it with others. He already had his barns packed full, but he kept storing up more and more. And the fact is that this man was not just unkind, he was stupid. He was a fool. If you can see what this man missed, then do what he did not. Lay-up treasure in heaven. Put your treasure where your heart should go. Verse **34** *Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.* If you want your heart to be toward the purposes of God, then put your money in that very place. Your treasure will go where your heart is, but there is this reality too – your heart follows your investments.

What does this mean for your financial planning, for your budget? You can't take it with you, right? A rich man dies and someone asks, "How much did he leave?" What is the answer? All of it. You can't take it with you but you can send it on ahead. This is the financial counsel of Jesus. Is this really possible? Can I put my money into an eternal account where it is utterly safe and where it earns interest at 10,000%? The answer is "Yes." By our giving, we make deposits into this amazing account.

Al Mohler mentioned on his podcast some time back that a study revealed there to be an inverse relationship between money spent on a wedding and the duration of the marriage. An inverse relationship. That means the more money spent on the wedding the less-likely one is to have a happy marriage. We could debate why that is, but this much struck me. That is a metaphor for what most people do with their money. They care about and thus spend their money on that which lasts a few hours, rather than what lasts sixty

years. It is a monumental miscalculation, a monumental folly. This was the mistake of the rich fool. A man much different was John Wesley. Wesley, who live in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, had a personal value to save all he could in order to give away all he could. When he was a student at Oxford, he had an income of thirty pounds. He live on 28 and gave away two. Year by year his income increased to 120 pounds a year but still he lived on 28 and gave the rest away. Now Wesley had no family to look after, other than a wife, so that makes a difference, but when he died he left only his books, his carriage, a few silver spoons, six English pounds, and one other thing – what was it? Oh yes – the Methodist Church. I see in Wesley a man who heard what Jesus said and believed it. He had a heart for the kingdom of Jesus and his treasure went where his heart was and his heart then followed his treasure in a spiral of spiritual growth and power. My friend, this is my longing for myself and for each of you

We will close with a unison prayer, but first let's ponder the words of Jim Elliot. Why don't we say them together, *He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose.*

*Father, we are blessed to have such an abundance. But we know You and Your Kingdom are forever, our riches are not. Forgive us for looking to our things to give us security or significance. Teach our hearts to hunger and thirst for You. Teach our hearts to flee the sin of greed, to cherish those gifts of the spirit that last forever, and to give with confidence and with joy toward those purposes which You have appointed. We offer You our hearts. We offer You our treasure, with thanksgiving for Jesus the pearl of greatest price, in whom alone we have all things, purely and forever. Amen*