

ST. ANDREW'S, BLACKROCK & BRAY - 24TH JANUARY 2021

THE PARABLES OF JESUS: THE RICH FOOL (LUKE 12:13-21)

Welcome and Announcements

"Welcome to our 'Church at Home' service transcript for Sunday 24th January 2021. Today we are continuing our series of the parables of Jesus, by looking at the 'Parable of the Rich Fool.' I pray that you will be encouraged and blessed as you read this today" - Rev. Andrew Gill

Call to Worship – Psalm 62:5-12

*For God alone my soul waits in silence,
for my hope is from him.*

*He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress; I shall not be shaken.*

*On God rests my deliverance and my honour;
my mighty rock, my refuge is in God.*

*Trust in him at all times, O people;
pour out your heart before him;
God is a refuge for us.*

*Those of low estate are but a breath,
those of high estate are a delusion;
in the balances they go up;
they are together lighter than a breath.
Put no confidence in extortion,
and set no vain hopes on robbery;
if riches increase, do not set your heart on them.*

*Once God has spoken;
twice have I heard this:
that power belongs to God,
and steadfast love belongs to you, O Lord.
For you repay to all
according to their work.*

Opening Prayer

Almighty and everlasting God,
the highest heaven of heavens
cannot contain your infinite glory,
yet you fix your affection on us.
We pray that you would give us
a humility of spirit and a purity of heart
so that our praise would be pleasing to you.

Father God we worship and adore
you for the great love that you have for us,
for the gift of your Son who redeemed us,
and for the presence of the Holy Spirit
who brings your power into our lives.

God of goodness and grace,
we pray for your mercy and
ask you to forgive us our sins.
Fill us with the love of Jesus Christ our Saviour,
and increase the fruit of the Spirit in our lives,
so that we would be quick to admit our wrongs
and swift in our repentance,
that our lives may be holy and righteous in your sight.

Almighty God,
by grace alone you call us
and accept us in your service.
Strengthen us by your Spirit,
and make us worthy of your call;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns
with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever.

Reading - Luke 12:13-21

¹³ Someone in the crowd said to him, 'Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.' ¹⁴ But he said to him, 'Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?' ¹⁵ And he said to them, 'Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.' ¹⁶ Then he told them a parable: 'The land of a rich man produced abundantly. ¹⁷ And he thought to himself, "What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?" ¹⁸ Then he said, "I will do this: I will pull 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 ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry." ²⁰ But God said to him, "You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?" ²¹ So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich towards God.'

Sermon - 'Parables of Jesus; the Rich Fool'

Today we're looking at another parable of Jesus, and this one is all about money. Reading this today you probably fit broadly into one of these two categories; either that during the pandemic your income stayed the same, but your expenses went right down, and now you've got some extra cash to

spend this year. Or alternatively, during the pandemic your income went down, maybe even considerably, and you're approaching this new year with anxiety. No matter which one of those two groups you fit into, we are all open to the temptation of greed in our lives. There are two lies that our world tells us about wealth and possessions, and we fall for them all the time. First, that more makes you happy. And second, that enough gives you security.

In today's parable we meet a man, who by the world standards, is successful, yet Jesus describes him as a fool, because he built his life on the foundation of those two lies. Through this story, Jesus warns us against selfish greed and arrogant planning, and directs us to putting our trust and faith in God. This parable is in Luke 12, the chapter begins with Jesus teaching his disciples about remaining faithful in difficult times, but there's a crowd of thousands others listening too. Halfway through somebody from the crowd interrupts Jesus and says, *"Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me."* (v.13) Obviously there has been some kind of dispute and this man feels he's been treated unfairly, and he demands Jesus to take his side. Jesus has no interest in involving himself in the middle of a family squabble over money, but he detects that the motive behind this man's interruption is greed. So Jesus says to the crowd, *"Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions."* (v.15)

He then goes on to tell this parable, *"The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops?' Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. And I'll say to myself, 'You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink, and be merry.'"* Now maybe you read that and think, 'What's the problem? Is it not just doing good business, is he not sensibly saving?' But the issue here is not what he does, but why he does it, because clearly he is motivated by selfish greed. In this short story the man spends

the whole time talking to himself, about himself! He says, 'I will do this, and I will do that' and he talks about *my* crops, and *my* barns, and *my* grain, and *my* goods, and *myself*. He's just obsessed with himself! He's got no gratitude towards God, there is no mention of a family that he's trying to provide for, nor friends that he's trying to share with, no employees that he's going to reward for their hard work, and by storing all this grain for himself he's keeping it away from the people who need that grain for food to eat. All he cares about is himself, and his desire is to indulge himself even further.

Jesus says we need to be on our guard against all kinds of selfish greed. Especially in today's modern society when there are giant billboards everywhere we go, and targeted adverts going right into our phones. We need to be so careful that we don't catch the disease of selfish greed. Not many of us reading this transcript today are farmers, so the idea of building bigger barns maybe seems a little bit distant to us. But what if this story was about somebody wanting to build a bigger house, or wanting to go on a more extravagant holiday, or somebody who wanted to build a bigger wardrobe for all their designer clothes, or to build bigger shelves for their collection? We can all start to believe that lie that more wealth, more possessions, will make us happier. But that is not true, we need to be on our guard against greed.

But what made this man truly foolish was his arrogant planning. He thought all the money he had gave him security for the future, but as the story goes on we see that he was completely wrong. *"But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?'"* (v.20) Just as this man was preparing for his luxurious retirement, all of a sudden he drops dead! All of his arrogant plans come to nothing, and the great wealth that he had accumulated for himself is useless as he stands before the judgment of God. How foolish it is to gain temporary things at the expense of eternal things.

This man had failed to realise that his possessions, his wealth, even his life here on earth are all just temporary. We need to remember that we too will die someday, and we need to look at all we own, and all we have in light of our own mortality. Jesus finishes off this parable by saying, *"This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich towards God."* (v.21) Being rich towards God means putting him first. It means replacing selfish greed with selfless generosity, and replacing arrogant planning with confident dependence. The best way to invest your money is to use it to help others.

This is why I love these parables, because once you begin to unpack this simple story, its truth is life changing. Of course money is important to life, but we need to make sure it doesn't become the most important thing. We all need money to live, but money should never be what we live for. So we need to ask ourselves, are we pursuing selfish greed or are we pursuing selfless generosity? Have our plans for the future become arrogant, or do we think about the future with humble dependence? The man who came to Jesus, and interrupted him, wanted a share in an earthly inheritance, but Jesus came to give us an eternal inheritance. Make sure we don't make the mistake that the man did, and that we're not foolish like the farmer in this story, but we realise that God is the only one who can make us happy, and he is the only one who can provide security for our future. Let us learn how to be rich towards him.

Prayer

Father God,

I thank you for your generosity, and for how you lovingly provide for all my needs. Thank you that Jesus became poor for my sake, so that through his earthly poverty I might inherit the riches of heaven. I am sorry for my selfishness, my greed, and my pride. Please forgive me for serving money before loving you. Fill me with the generosity Christ, and give me wisdom to be a good steward of all the resources you have given to me. Amen