

Upside-Down Kingdom (3)- Not Rich Toward God

(Luke 12:13-21)

I. Introduction

- A. Detroit has its share of problems caused by gas crisis; another is more systemic
 - 1. Every car maker points to its quality—Honda, Ford, “*Quality is job one*”
 - a. But true quality-made cars should last awhile—10, 15 or 20 years
 - b. But if your quality car lasts 10-15 years, then who needs a new one?
 - 2. Detroit must convince us to buy new cars—change models, features, etc.
 - a. Must create dissatisfaction with old model so that we will buy the new
 - b. Economy based on buying things we don’t need w/ money we don’t have
- B. There’s this old Bible word that we don’t use must that applies— *covetousness*
 - 1. The last of the Ten Commandments says “*Thou shalt not covet*” (**Ex 20:17**)
 - a. This is the same Hebrew for Eve seeing the fruit as desirable (**Gen 3:6**)
 - b. This desire for things becomes the motivation of other sins (**Mic 2:1-2**)
 - 2. Greek word for “*covetousness*” is also translated by familiar word—**greed**
 - a. Paul says that greed or covetousness is like the sin of idolatry (**Col 3:5**)
 - 1) It characteristic of pagans (**Rom 1:29**) and false teachers (**2 Pet 2:3**)
 - 2) There wasn’t to be even a hint of greed among Christians (**Eph 5:3**)
 - b. We know that Paul says that “*God loves a cheerful giver*” (**2 Cor 9:7**)
 - 1) Generous gift is contrasted with “*not as one **grudgingly** given*” (**9:5**)
 - 2) That’s the word for “*covet.*” Greed keeps us from cheerful giving.
 - 3. What’s the connection? Are we greedy because we want a new car?
 - a. Maybe not, but think about the average American family and their debt
 - 1) 43% of American families spend more than they earn each year.
 - 2) Average American spends \$1.22 for each dollar they earn in income.
 - 3) Average household carries about \$12,000 in credit card debt.
 - 4) About 23% of American families have maxed out their credit cards
 - 5) And we have a lot of cards—7.6 credit, 3.8 store cards, 1.1 debit card
 - b. **Point:** Reason we struggle with debt is because we struggle with greed!
 - 4. We can call it greed, covetousness or materialism— the Bible calls it sin!

5. In **Luke 12**, Jesus is interrupted by a man caught up in greed (**12:13**)
 - a. Jesus is right in the middle of teaching some deep spiritual truths
 - 1) He warned against the yeast (hypocrisy) of the Pharisees (**12:1**)
 - 2) He tells them God has the very hairs of their head numbered (**12:7**)
 - 3) He has just warned about blasphemy of the Holy Spirit (**12:10**)
 - b. This guy doesn't hear anything because he's thinking of his **money**
 - c. When we get thinking about money, we cannot really listen to God
 - 1) Jesus warns about the dangers of greed (covetousness) (**Luke 12:15**)
 - 2) He then tells the Parable of the Rich Fool (**Reading: Luke 12:16-21**)

II. The Rich Fool (Luke 12:16-21)

- A. This is the classic story about the rich that just keep getting richer.
 1. A rich farmer has a bumper crop, and doesn't have enough space in barn
 - a. So he decides to tear down his old barns and build bigger new ones
 - b. He then settles into a comfortable retirement to enjoy golden years
 2. **Question:** Is there anything wrong with bigger barns or early retirement?
 3. I know someone who retired in an old barn, and then made it bigger!
- B. Whatever it was that made this man a fool, it wasn't really about barns!
 1. **First**, he wasn't a fool because of his **SUCCESS**—it's OK to be wealthy
 - a. Some of the heroes of the Old Testament had pretty big barns
 - 1) **Abraham** was rich, **Joseph** was successful, and **David** was powerful
 - 2) And these man had wealth, success & power as blessings from God!
 - b. It isn't sinful to be wealthy, and poverty itself isn't particularly pious!
 - c. Special temptations come with money, but poverty has its temptations
 - d. Maybe the "*Prayer of Agur*" is better model than Jabez (**Prov 30:7-9**)
 2. **Second**, he wasn't a fool because of his **PLANS**—*retirement and savings*
 - a. It was not foolish that he was thinking of and preparing for the future
 - b. What is the point in Proverbs about ants and sluggards? (**Prov 6:6-8**)
 - c. I know a preacher who gave away all his savings to follow **Luke 12:22**
 - 1) KJV says, "*Take no thought...*" Birds have no barns (*like rich fool*)
 - 2) I admire man's faith, but not his exegesis— *savings is stewardship!*

- C. What made this man “The Rich Fool” was his **FOCUS** on material things.
1. Fool “*stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God*” (**12:21**)
 - a. He was focused on material things, but he did not focused on God
 - 1) He used his material things for himself, and not for God
 - 2) He pursued material things to the exclusion of pursuing God
 - b. And in the end, all he had was material things... *and did not have God*
 - c. He was a fool, not because of what he had, but what he didn’t have
 2. Jesus wants us to understand that life is more than just our stuff (**12:15**)
 - a. The very nature of money and material things is that they are **distracting**
 - 1) Few people will come out and say, “*Money is most important thing*”
 - 2) Why do so many of us act that way? Because money is distracting.
 - b. That’s what led to the parable—man so distracted he could hear Jesus.
 3. Later, Peter does Robert De Niro impression (**12:41**) “*You talking to me?*”
 - a. Asks of another parable, “*Are you telling this parable to us or everyone?*”
 - b. We don’t have to ask Jesus if he is talking to us in The Rich Fool
 - 1) He is talking to us and our greedy, materialistic, capitalistic culture
 - 2) We might not **all** be materialistic, but we **all** have to fight tendency!

III. Conclusion

- A. The Bible tales two very clear positions when it comes to material things
1. Material things are seen as a blessing from God to be used for him
 - a. God gives us the ability to produce wealth (**Deut 8:18**)
 - b. God intends for us to enjoy those material blessings (**Eccl 9:7**)
 - c. We should be content with blessings that God gives (**Phil 4:12-13**)
 - d. We are to use our material blessings to bless others (**1 Tim 6:17-18**)
 2. At the same time, nothing is more potentially harmful to us than money
 - a. It’s the root of all kinds of evil and cause of much sorrow (**1 Tim 6:9-10**)
 - b. It’s easier for a camel to thread a needle than rich to be saved (**Mk 10:25**)
 - c. Money is false god that rivals our affection/allegiance to God (**Lk 16:13**)
 3. What is the difference between blessing and potential harm? **Our focus!**

- B. Several years ago, Lynn and I toured the Hearst Castle in San Simeon, CA
1. It's opulent, palatial estate of newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst
 - a. Construction began in 1918 and continued until 1948 (*When became too ill*)
 - b. Main house (*Castle Grande*) is 60,045 square ft (90,000 square ft total)
 - c. As 56 bedrooms, 61 bathrooms & indoor pool modeled after Roman bath
 2. William Randolph Hearst died in 1951 of a heart attack at age 88
 - a. His castle is now owned by State of California; you can tour it for \$24
 - b. Hearst Castle remains as a solemn reminder that you *can't take it with you*
 - c. His obsession with that mansion didn't prepare him for heavenly mansion
 3. The old bumper sticker says, "*The one who dies with the most toys wins*"
 - a. Bible says, "*The one who dies with the most toys... dies*" (**Psa 49:10-13**)
 - 1) The mistake of the Rich Fool was that he forgot about eternity
 - 2) He had plans... Old Yiddish proverb, "*Man plans, God laughs*"
 - b. Focusing on material things can cause us to forget the final appointment
 - c. No one ever gets out of this life alive... or with their wallet!
 4. Focus on the things of money and your attention is taken away from God
- C. Never is the Upside-Down Kingdom any more topsy-turvy from our world
1. The focus of our world is to acquire more—money, power, status
 - a. We have recently seen the greed of Wall Street have dire consequences
 - b. Greed has more dire consequences if we don't root it from our lives
 2. The problem is that so few people recognize this greed in their lives
 - a. Teacher: Heard every sin confessed (adultery to murder) except greed!
 - b. We want to see greed as the sin of Wall Street, not of Main Street
 3. Let me leave you with a quote from Richard D. Phillips—

Every Christian should sacrificially retrain his or her acquiring of possessions in order to give more generously to others. If we have never sold or denied ourselves anything in order to give, then in Jesus' terms we are not living a life that is rich toward God. Only by divesting from this world can we safeguard our hearts from the covetousness that is so common and perilous to our spiritual life.
- D. Ultimately, God is more precious than silver or gold—do we believe that?