

## Warning against Greed and Materialism -- Provision is Promised

Luke 12:13-34

*Luke 12:13-15: Then one from the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." 14 But He said to him, "Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?" 15 And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses."*

### Background Notes

In verse 13, someone in the crowd called out, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." We are not told the details of this situation, but it's obvious that there was a family dispute about a will and an inheritance. That, by the way, is not uncommon - and maybe some of you have had (or probably will have) a similar experience. The common saying, "where there's a will, there's a way" has sometimes been changed to, "where there's a will, there are a lot of relatives!"

Notice that our Lord did not tell the man that he should be ashamed of himself for thinking about the family will, nor did He say that the man had no right to be concerned. After all, family wills are important. But the Lord essentially told the man that he should take his case to the proper legal authorities. Then the Lord used this occasion to warn His disciples (and all who were listening) about the dangers of greed, covetousness, and materialism. Verse 15 says that He spoke to them – not just to the man who made the request, but also to all of them.

In the first section of Luke 12 the Lord used the hypocrisy of the Pharisees as an opportunity to teach His disciples about avoiding hypocrisy, and about being courageous in their testimony. In this section the Lord used the man's request about his family's will as an opportunity to further teaching about life as a disciple. The Lord's use of these occasions to teach, by the way, is a good practical lesson for all of us. Look for golden opportunities to teach biblical truths!

### Doctrinal Points

#### 1. Those who "build bigger barns" will be disappointed with temporal loss.

*Verses 16-21: Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. 17 And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' 18 So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.'" 20 But God said to him, 'Fool!*

*This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’ 21 “So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”*

In verse 15 the Lord declared that life does not consist in the abundance of the material things we possess. Do we really believe that statement? Most of us are materialistic to one degree or another. I’ve often said I don’t care what kind of car I drive, or what kind of house I live in, but I want the latest and the best skis! So I’m a materialist in that area – and every area of life comes under the Lord’s warning in verse 15. Beware of **every** form of greed! So we all need to be careful.

If we did not have the Lord’s comments on this man’s parable, we might think this man thought and reasoned like a good businessman. His land was very productive. He was a good farmer – and there’s nothing wrong with that. Why not expand and build bigger barns? Wouldn’t we have reasoned the same way? It seems pretty logical not to leave our grain and our goods unprotected. And why not take early retirement? *“And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, [and play golf] and be merry.”*

Does this kind of reasoning sound familiar? Even to Christians? What does the Lord think of such reasoning? He called the man a **fool!** Not just off the mark, but a **fool!** That’s strong language!

Why did the Lord call this man a fool? First of all, the man was presuming that he would live for many years, when in fact he had only a few hours left. The lesson for us is obvious. We have no idea how long we will live.

Furthermore, the man could not control his wealth in the future: *“But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’”* Who would enjoy the man’s wealth, and how would it be used after his death - not just in the immediate future, but in the years to come? This is just as true for us today, too. We may think we have everything under control by the provisions in our wills, but we should think long term, not just one generation. Will that money that we leave behind be squandered? Will it be used for the wrong purposes at some time in the future? We can’t be sure.

The man’s basic problem was that he left God out of the picture. Verse 21: *“So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”* The man had left God out of the picture – he was not rich toward God.

The implication, especially in view of verse 33, was that the man should not have been building bigger barns, but should rather have been giving his profits to the Lord. *“Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”* This command is just as important for us today as it was then.

In the next few verses, the Lord assured us that we can put the Lord first, even in the area of material things, because He promises to meet our basic needs. We don’t have to build bigger barns! Those who build bigger barns will be disappointed with temporal loss.

## 2. Those who seek Kingdom values will be delighted with eternal reward.

*Verses 22-34: Then He said to His disciples, "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on. **23** Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing. **24** Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds? **25** And which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? **26** If you then are not able to do the least, why are you anxious for the rest? **27** Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. **28** If then God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith? **29** "And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. **30** For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things. **31** But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. **32** "Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. **33** Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys. **34** For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

In verse 33 the Lord taught that we should give our profits to the Lord instead of building bigger barns and trying to "save it for a rainy day." The proverbial "rainy day" is already here for many people! If you give your treasure away to the Lord now, you will not have to worry about future loss. Not only that, your heart will be properly focused on what's really important. And - you will have treasure in heaven forever!

But you may say, "What about my needs now? What about my future needs?" Don't worry -- the Lord will take care of our basic needs. In verse 22, the Lord commanded us not to worry, and He gave us several reasons why believers don't have to worry.

1. We are more valuable to God than the ravens. If God takes care of scavenger birds, He will certainly take care of us.
2. Worrying doesn't help! You can't add time to your life by worrying.
3. We are more important than the flowers and the grass in the fields. If God makes these natural plants beautiful, will He not provide for us?
4. The Lord knows our needs. Verses 30 -31: "...*your Father knows that you need these things. But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you.*" Notice the prerequisite in verse 31: seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. He will provide for our needs.

So if we make God's Kingdom a priority in our lives, not only will our temporal needs be met, but we will have unfailing treasures in Heaven. Those who seek Kingdom values on earth will be delighted with eternal reward!

## **Practical Application**

### **Don't use Luke 12:24 as your excuse for not working!**

Verse 24: *“Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds?”* In our last talk on Luke 12 we saw that we shouldn't use verses 11-12 as an excuse for not being prepared for teaching or preaching or other ministry. Neither should we pull verse 24 out of context and use it as an excuse for not working! Our Lord's point about the ravens is that if God takes care of these scavenger birds, how much more will He take care of us? We are more valuable to God than birds!

This verse does **not** justify laziness or not getting a job. In fact, 2 Thessalonians 3:10 says that if anyone will not work, “let him not eat.” So don't use Luke 12:24 as your excuse for not working!