Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Rich Fool
Scripture: Luke 12:13-21
Code: 42-171

We now come to the precious Word of God and I invite you to open your Bible to the twelfth chapter of Luke. We are progressing through Luke's gospel. We are well beyond the half-way point in our study of this gospel, though not in any hurry, wanting to absorb all of its wondrous truths. We come this morning to Luke chapter 12 verses 13 through 21...let me read this text to you.

"And someone in the crowd said to Him, 'Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.' But He said to him, 'Man, who appointed Me a judge or arbiter over you?' And 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.' And He told them a parable saying, 'The land of a certain rich man was very productive and he began reasoning to himself, saying...What shall I do since I have no place to store my crops? And he said...This is what I'll do, I'll tear down my barns and build larger ones and there I will store all my grain and all my goods. 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.' 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? So is the man who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.'"

This text of Scripture has been called the Rich Fool. It could be called the Doom of the Materialist. As we have learned through our study of the gospel of Luke, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Messiah and the Savior, came to give sinners the mercy and grace of forgiveness and eternal life. He came to bring the good news of salvation. And Jesus, of course, attracted people in huge crowds with His message and His miracles. But as the three years of His ministry progressed, it became apparent that the people were rejecting Him and His message. In fact, they were increasingly moving from being interested to being curious, to being hostile. The crowds are still huge. Verse 1 says there were many thousands. It really means tens of thousands who were following Him, huge crowds. The majority of those crowds had drunk deeply of the Pharisees' and scribes' propaganda. In spite of the miracle power, in spite of the clarity of His teaching, in spite of the winsomeness of His person, they had bought in to the spin that the Pharisees and scribes had put on Jesus that He was of Satan, not God. More and more people are now buying into that. He must be of Satan, they think, because He contradicts their Jewish religion and their Jewish religion must be of God for they're the people of God. And so the idea is to surface everywhere that Jesus disagrees with them and therefore point out that He must be satanic. They are, however, still curious. Jesus is still the best

show in town, stunning, riveting, compelling. And they follow Him if only to trap Him in some opposition to their law.

But inside this increasingly hostile crowd, inside these tens of thousands, inside this mass of curious rejecters there are still some who haven't made up their minds and they are described in verse 1 as disciples. That's not a technical term for the Twelve, that's a non-technical word in the Greek, *mathetes*, that simply means learners. There are some still studying Jesus, still learning, still trying to come to a conclusion and it is to them that He directs this sermon, this discourse that starts there in verse 1 and runs all the way to verse 9 of chapter 13, it's a long sermon and discourse directed, heard by all, but directed at those still trying to decide concerning Jesus. That's why verse 1 says, "He began saying to His disciples, first of all." Everybody heard but they were the target of His message. Their souls were still in the balance. They were not yet confirmed. And if they are to know the truth and believe the truth and receive the gospel and salvation and eternal life, there are two things at the very outset that they have to avoid...two things that characterize their culture. They are noted in the two uses of the word "beware." Go back to verse 1, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy." Beware of false religion. Beware of hypocritical religion.

Second beware you heard me read a moment ago, down in verse 15, "He said to them, 'Beware and be on your guard against every form of greed.'" if they or you or anyone else wants to receive salvation, forgiveness, eternal life in heaven, there are two pervasive damning forces that must be avoided...Beware of hypocrisy and beware of greed.

Now you might look at those and say, "Well, those are two sort of randomly selected sins out of a long catalog of sins that perhaps Jesus is only using as illustrative of the greater all-encompassing list that He might have given. But that's not the case. These are not randomly selected sample sins among many. Rather, these are the two essential realms which exist. There are only two realms which exist...one is the material realm and the other is the immaterial. One is the spiritual, the other is the physical. One is the natural, the other is the supernatural. There are only those two realms. Hypocrisy relates to the spiritual realm and greed relates to the material world...both the material and the immaterial world threaten to damn eternal souls. You get into the wrong spiritual teaching and the wrong spiritual influence and your soul will be damned. If you get into the wrong physical influence, the wrong material influence, and your soul will be damned. Both the immaterial world which is basically operated under the power of the prince of the air, Satan himself, and the material world which is also his operation, are designed to bring about the eternal damnation of souls. And Satan, frankly, is just as satisfied to seduce souls into hell by either religious deception or natural deception, by either deception in the immaterial and spiritual world, or deception in the material world. Hell would gladly welcome souls coming to them out of the religious world or out of the secular world. The deceitfulness of religion and the deceitfulness of riches work against the soul.

And by the way, though they can be separately described and separately defined, they don't exist separately. That is to say, they are blended together in the lives of the unregenerate. And that is true even of those who are most involved in the religious world, religious hypocrites, the architects and the perpetrators of false religion are invariably motivated by money. False teachers do what they do for money, for filthy lucre. That's always been true. In the Old Testament and the New, they are always so described. And it was true of the Pharisees. They were hyper religious, they were fanatically religious, they were extremely religious...they were, in their own minds, the spiritual of the spiritual. And yet, in Luke 16:14 it says, "Now the Pharisees were lovers of money." There is no necessary divorce between the material and the immaterial in that sense. In fact, as I say, those who are most engaged in the religions that are false are inevitably engaged in the love of money. Beware of false religion, the love of error. Beware of material wealth, the love of money.

The verse at the very end of the text I read lays it out. Here's the real issue. You either lay up treasure for yourself, or you're rich toward God. We'll get to that in just a moment. But as I thought about this passage, of course as you would as well, you're struck with the fact that at this particular time in our society in the western world, in our lifetime, we enjoy staggering material prosperity...staggering. Our lives are filled to overflowing with material things. We have so many possessions that they possess us. We are consumers being consumed by our consumption. We have stockpiles of possessions and the indebtedness incurred to acquire them...which some people will spend their lifetime attempting to pay off. I thought about it a little bit in terms of my own personal history as a kid. I remember as a little child houses we lived in that didn't even have a garage. It didn't mean that we didn't have a place to put a car, it meant that we really didn't have a place to put anything. And in those days we didn't feel too deprived because we didn't have a whole lot of stuff to put anywhere. Nowadays can you imagine not having a garage just so you can fill it with stuff? Maybe you can get your car in, maybe you can't. I've watched as the years have gone by along the freeways in particular, but a lot of other places in our society, the development of storage places by the almost infinite thousands. And I always wonder...what is in there that you don't need and can't get at easily? And how many people are still paying off the credit cards that bought the stuff that's in there?

It's important to acknowledge that all the things we have in this world come from God, in this sense, that God created a planet which has phenomenal capability to produce these kinds of things. All of this comes out of the creation of God. Everything that is material is in some way coming from this planet. God knew that and God does give us richly all things to enjoy. The issue is not possessions, the issue is attitude toward them. What you have in this life is only in this life. If it material, it belongs only to this life, therefore, folks, it has no real value...has no real value. It has no enduring value. And of all the generations that have lived, certainly we're in a better position to understand the issue

of attitude than maybe anybody else in history, or certainly most people because when we have so much more than we need, that reveals our attitude toward it. You see, wealth creates all kinds of choices. It creates all kinds of choices and that's what the parable indicates. A man had more than he needed. Okay...what am I going to do? And the world in which we live where we have so much more than we need is filled with so many choices, we could spend all of our time just making the choices...we can get so sucked up in trying to decide what to buy, where to go to get it, how to make the trip and where to sit it when we get it and then where to put the old when we replace it with...life can just be consumed with these choices. People can be seduced as much by the material world as they can be the immaterial world.

In 1 Timothy chapter 6 Paul said something that I thought was interesting from this perspective. He says in verse 9, "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 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 a pang." You want money, you want riches? You will lead yourself into temptation, traps, foolish, harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. It produces all kinds of evil. It causes people to wander away from the faith and pierce themselves with many a pain. You know, you could alter that verse by just substituting false religion. Those who follow a false religion fall into temptation, a snare, many foolish harmful desires, plunging men into ruin and destruction, for false religion is a root of all sorts of evil, etc., etc. You can take your pick. In the end, the love of money is a kind of idolatry, covetousness is idolatry, says the Apostle Paul. This is the issue here. You had people in that culture as you do today who were captive to false religion, but you had other people who were captive to earthly possessions. You had people who were seduced by the spiritual and people who were seduced by the physical. You had people being seduced by the material, and the blend, of course.

All those Pharisees and scribes who were lovers of money had been seduced by both. And that's pretty typical. In fact, if you look at the world of false religion today, you will see the purveyors and the architects of those false religions inevitably become fat cats, inordinately wealthy, as all false teachers do what they do for money. That's what's behind this discussion because it's a warning. You can be seduced right into hell from the immaterial or the material, from the spiritual or the physical, from the world above or the world below. And that's why Jesus gives this double warning of bewares. Let's turn to the text, verse 13, and the story flows fairly quickly.

:"Someone in the crowd said to Him, 'Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.'" Now I confess that I am a transition person when it comes to studying the Bible. That question just jumps off the page and you ask yourself....What's the context for this, right? This is one discourse, tens of thousands of people, they're trying to get close to Jesus to hear what He's saying,

and so they're stepping on each other, verse 1 says. This crush of people and Jesus is teaching, and what has He been teaching? He's been teaching about false religion. He's been teaching about the deadly danger of hypocrisy, that is saying you know God when you don't, saying you have the truth when you don't....false religion. And He has been warning hypocrites that whatever they're hiding will be revealed, whatever they're covering will be uncovered, verses 2 and 3. Whatever they've said in the dark is going to be heard in the light. Whatever they've whispered in their private place is going to be proclaimed from the housetop. But He's warned them not to worry about what men say when the worst they can do is kill your body, but you better fear what God, the one who can send your soul to hell, thinks. He's calling them to some very serious consideration. He's asking them to think deeply about their...their hypocritical hearts, to think deeply about the wretchedness inside. He's asking them to give honor to God who has the authority to cast their souls into hell. And this God who knows every sparrow and who knows every hair of every head, this is no information passes by Him without His knowing. God who knows everything, God who will reveal everything, God who has the authority to cast people into hell, He's the one you better honor, instead of doing your hypocritical religion before men that you may receive accolades from them. He's been talking about honoring the Son of God, verse 8 and 9, confessing Me, the Son of Man, before men and then being confessed by the Son of Man before the angels of God, rather than denying Him and being denied before the angels of God. Get a heavenly perspective, realize God is judge and Christ is Savior.

And then He goes to talk about the Holy Spirit and how important it is not to blaspheme the revelation that comes from the Holy Spirit about Christ, because if you don't accept the Holy Spirit revelation, you can't know Christ. If you don't know Christ, you can't know God. Very serious issues. And He talks about how the Holy Spirit is the teacher of truth who is behind the truth of Christ and will be there to bring the truth to your mind, even in the most dire persecution. He's talking about the loftiest of all things, the most elevated truths of the Trinity. And some guy in the crowd blurts this out, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me." What a materialist. This guy's not hard to figure out. And he can't wait for the Lord to stop talking about heaven, salvation, God, forgiveness, revelation and get to the really good stuff. This guy wants to turn it into a Tony Robbins seminar. This is the quintessential naturalist. This is the materialist. No interest in the spiritual at all. He just can't wait for Jesus to get on his subject. He doesn't care about the Son of Man confessing him before the angels of God. He doesn't care about what he can't see. He doesn't care about heaven. He's in to earth and he's not even embarrassed. He's not even ashamed because it's pretty routine. He thinks he's just a macho guy who will say what everybody else is thinking. And it's not a question, it's a command. "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me."

You say, "Well whatever prompted this?" Well the word "teacher" informs us, *didaskale*in the Greek. He identifies Jesus as a rabbi and rabbis did this as a routine in their villages and their regions. Rabbis were approached by people to bring the law to bear upon civil issues. This is pretty routine stuff. They often did this. And so his request is within the framework of cultural expectation. "Tell my brother to divide the family inheritance to me." He probably pointed to his brother who had to be

there or Jesus couldn't have told him. He feels like he's not getting what he deserves. Now it's useless to speculate the facts, you know, whether who's the older brother, who's the younger brother. You know, did he have a right to this or did... He didn't want any discussion about the facts, he just said, "Tell him." We don't know whether he had a legitimate claim on it or not, but I would find it hard to believe that he had any legitimate claim, this was just a manifestation of his greed. There were ancient laws in Israel about the inheritance, Deuteronomy 21, the book of Numbers, the estate was left to the oldest son. The estate therefore was kept in tact and the oldest son would manage the estate and use all of its wealth and all of its products and all of its possessions for the benefit of the whole family. He sort of became the new father of the family. He didn't waste it all on himself, he simply managed it. That's what the law of primogenitor was intended to do, not to divest certain members of the family of the care they needed, but rather to pass on the responsibility of headship and leadership to the father, the next generation.

But changes have come so much in the intervening centuries since those laws. There were laws in the early years of the theocracy that said if a teenager is disobedient, kill him. That was a real quick way to stamp out juvenile delinquency. But that has long since gone by the way, as the theocratic kingdom was no longer ruled by God at all. And many of these things that were established early on had changed and the culture less agrarian at this point, long moved away from the Old Testament laws, although they certainly kept the ones they wanted to keep.

The man is a materialist. He's greedy. He's covetous. And he wants Jesus to tell his brother with some kind of authority because it was obvious Jesus had great power and authority to give him his money. Verse 14, let's start there. "He said to him, 'Man, who appointed Me a judge or arbiter over you?'" That is an unsympathetic response. "Man," that is not an endearing expression. That is like saying, "Mister." That's a term of distance. That's a title used for a stranger. I don't know you, I don't know anything about you, and I have no relationship to you. Who appointed Me a judge or arbiter over you?

Now you know from the Bible that God has appointed all judgment to Christ, but that's a spiritual judgment, right? John 5. And in the future Jesus will be the judge of all the earth and He will judge every soul spiritually. But when it comes to economic matters, when it comes to family matters, when it comes to social matters, when it comes to the distribution of wealth, when it comes to economics, when it comes to earthly possessions, He renders no decisions. You could sum it up in this expression, "My Kingdom is not of this world." I will render no opinion on matters social, legal or economic. But he didn't hesitate for one second to render a decision on that man's spiritual condition. And that's where Jesus always goes. The legal and the economic and the civil and the social all is a part of the world. Jesus said that's not My Kingdom, I'm going to speak to the spiritual. And so we see in verse 15 the admonition. And then we'll see the anecdote and the application.

The admonition... "He said to them...He nailed it, 'Beware,'" says to the whole crowd, "'Be on your guard against every form of greed.'" He didn't have to point to the man and say, "Like that guy." It was obvious. "Beware," and He had just said beware back in verse 1 about the leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy. Here He says beware, be on your guard against every form of greed. And this is the admonition that exposes the real issue, beware, *horate(?)*, look, present imperative, behold, mark, observe and then guard, *phulasso*is a military term, provide protective vigilance against every form of greed, all covetousness, *pleonexes(?)*, strong word, all covetousness. And the word basically means an inordinate desire for riches, grasping, extorting, scheming is included in this kind of thing. This is as damning as false religion. This is the thirst...*pleonexes*is the thirst for more, it's like drinking salt water, the more you drink, the thirstier you get.

In Ecclesiastes it is wisdom, what Solomon says in chapter 5 verse 10, "He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves abundance with its income." People who worship money and who love money and who love abundance and love possessions are never satisfied when they get it, it's just like drinking salt water. The sin is not in having more. The sin is being discontent. The sin is not in having wealth, the sin is in what you do with it. It's not the amount, it's the attitude. Abraham was wealthy. Job was wealthy. Solomon was wealthy. Even in the New Testament, no doubt Joseph of Arimathaea was wealthy. And there were wealthy people in the New Testament who had the church in their home because they had a large enough home to have a church. It's not about what you have, it's about how you feel about what you have. And that's what the Scripture warns about. It warns about greed and covetousness and the lust for more so as to consume it on your own desires. To define life as an acquisition of material possession is to commit the deadly sin of serving the creature rather than the Creator, Romans 1:25. Beware of this, Jesus says. Back to verse 15, and here's why. "For not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions." Not even when you have, and the word abundance means more than enough, more than sufficient. It could be excess. It could be surplus. That's how it's used three other times in Luke...Luke 9:17; Luke 15:17; Luke 21:4. Even if you have more than enough, it still doesn't provide real life. By the way, the word life in Greek can be one of two words, *bios*which is simply life as opposed to being dead, biological death. You might translate it existence. Then the word for life which is used here is *zoe*, encompasses all that makes life worth living, all that is real life, satisfaction, fulfillment, enjoyment, meaning, purpose. And he says, "Even when you have surplus and you have excess, that doesn't make really living, that doesn't take care of giving you real life." In fact, the life He's referring to here is eternal life because that's the only kind of life that is fulfilling, satisfying, meaningful, purposeful, producing peace and joy and hope and blessing. You're never going to get that real life from the material world...even if you have more than enough.

So He's saying to this guy and everybody who thought that way, "You're going down the wrong path, man, you're going down the wrong path. You're drinking salt water here. You're never going to have

your thirst quenched because the life that you need, the life that satisfies, the life that fulfills, the life that is eternal and lasts forever is the life of God in your soul and it's not going to come through acquiring possessions." Greed is idolatry. It's worshiping the creature, not the Creator...so says Ephesians 5:5 and Colossians 3:5. Jesus said in John 10:10, "I've come that they might have life...the real life...and have it more abundantly." He wants to give you the life that truly is abundant...and it's that eternal life. That's the admonition.

Look at the anecdote. Story...simple. He told them a parable, *parabole*, the second part of that word *bole*from *ballo*, to place, *para*, alongside, to place alongside. That's what a parable is, it's a story placed alongside a principle to illustrate the principle. So He said the land of a certain rich man was very productive. Now that's good, no dishonesty here, no extortion, no crime, nothing. He just had a great crop. By the way, I love that verb where it says "very productive," that is the verb *euphoreo*and it means to yield a good crop and we get an English word out of it, euphoria. Now for us euphoria has nothing to do with a crop, euphoria is elation, being filled with joy, kind of over the top satisfaction, fulfillment, feelings of happiness, feelings of well-being. But how interesting that that came in an agrarian culture from having a good crop, being successful. And he had this crop, it was just absolutely huge. No dishonesty, no ill-gotten gain, no extortion, no evil, no immorality, no illegality, he came to honest wealth. That's fine. And you know what? If you're a farmer, of all things that human beings do, that one is most dependent upon circumstances and factors that are outside your control, right? If ever you should thank God, you should thank God for a good crop since providentially He controls all the elements in the factors. And so verse 17, this man began reasoning to himself saying, "What shall I do since I have no place to store my crops?"

Well that's a good question, that's a reasonable one, isn't it? He faces a dilemma about what to do with this massive harvest. Oh he could build more storage, but if you build more storage he'd use more land and that would take up the land that he grows the crop on. Maybe that's not the good way to go cause this is good productive land. What am I going to do? Where am I going to put all this?

Now that begins to give you a little bit of a giveaway. I could think of a lot of options at that point, but the one that he came up with in verse 18, 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." You know what strikes me about that? Two verses...eight I's and four my's...I...I..I...I...my...my...my...my. And here you get the insight into the materialist. You mean, there...this is an imaginary story but I mean wouldn't there be in the minds of the people standing there listening to this an imaginary group of people who went out and pulled in the harvest and maybe you might say to those hard-working people, "I'll share some with them." And wouldn't there be an imaginary village with some widows and some orphans? And wouldn't there be an imaginary village with some poor people? And isn't there a temple and isn't there a synagogue? And isn't there the work of God and wouldn't He be up for consideration for

some of this stuff? I..I...I..I...I...my...my...my...my. What's wrong with this picture? No, he's a smart guy. He is crafty.

You say, "Well he could just sell it all and make some money." Nah, nah, nah, you don't want to do that, you flood the market with too much stuff and the price goes down. So what do you do? You restrict what? Supply. So you build bigger barns and the same pad, higher ones so you don't take up any more of your fields and you store it all and then you let it out at whatever pace you want. And then you become the fat cat, you become the Middle Eastern local guru, you're going to control the prices. By the way, he didn't just store his grain there, he stored his goods there, "And my goods." What's that? This is the only biblical storage unit I know of. This guy's got a lot of other stuff he's storing up. I would have thought he would have said, "You know, God, You're the one who makes the rain fall, You're the one who makes the earth warm, You're the one that makes the seed to grow. I need to take some of this that You've given to me and give it back to You because I know I'm to love You with all my heart, soul, mind and strength and I can't be restrained in my giving to you because my love commands me to be generous with You. Love gives, it can't not give. And then I know the second law is love your neighbor as yourself and because Your love abides in me, I love these people and I want to share this with others." No, no, that here? And look at verse 19, "And I will say to my soul." You want to know how much of a materialist this guy was? He lived alone and when he had a conversation it was with himself. I mean, it would have been a little window into something good about this guy if he would have said, "I said to my wife...or I said to my family..." This is the miser. "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,'" you're set for life, man, you are set for life, leisure. All you have to do is control the spout at the bottom of the silo and let out only as much as you want and control the price and you are fixed.

Soul is in the singular. The man lived in the singular thought, in the singular, had a conversation only with himself. He has it all. Take your ease. It means retire. Eat, drink and be merry, blatant Hedonism...eat, drink, party. That's it, just eat, drink and party. The materialist motto, you only go around once, so grab all the gusto you can get.

And Jesus in telling this story, I'm trying to think about...what's this guy in the crowd thinking? My guess is he's salivating about the fact that he would like to be that man. That's why he asked the question. But he wasn't alone. The problem with this man in the story is he forgot three things...God, others and his own mortality. Whew...those are bad things to miss. He forgot God, he forgot others and he forgot his own mortality.

And then comes the surprise which is so common to Jesus' stories, verse 20, "But God said to him, 'You fool,'" *aphron*, from *phren*, the mind, a-negative, you mindless, ignorant, destitute of knowledge and truth, you fool, "This very night your soul is required of you and now who will own what you have

prepared?" Oh the materialist's worst nightmare. Somebody else gets it all. "This night your soul is required of you," and the actual Greek says, "This night they demand your soul." That's an old rabbinic expression, a common plural construction used by the rabbis to refer to an act of God cause God is plural, Elohim. They, God, the Trinity, the very Trinity He had been referring to a few minutes before this are going to require your soul.

How foolish to make all your grandiose plans, forget God, forget others, forget your own mortality. James says, "Come now, you who say today or tomorrow we'll go such and such a city and spend a year there, engage in business, make a profit. You don't know what your life will be like tomorrow, you're just a vapor that appears a little while then vanishes away like steam off coffee." Whew... You ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we'll live and do this or that." You ought to say, "If the Lord wills." And then if you're going to say "if the Lord wills," you better be careful to know that you're right with the Lord. He says, Jesus in the story to the imaginary man, "God said tonight this very night your soul is required of you and now who will own what you have prepared?" And Jesus there shows probably His memory of Ecclesiastes...Ecclesiastes 2:18 and 19 says this, "Thus I hated all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun for I must leave it to the man who will come after me and who knows whether he'll be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over all the fruit of my labor for which I have labored for acting wisely under the sun. This too is vanity." And so he says, "I despaired of all the fruit of my labor for which I labored under the sun." As I said, it's the materialist's worst nightmare. And that was Solomon in his unconverted condition saying, "I've got all this wealth and you know what's going to happen, I'm going to leave it to some fool." You better take into account your mortality.

And the application of the story, the final point in verse 21, "So is the man who lays up treasure for himself, he's a fool, he's mindless because he hasn't given consideration to God and he's going to face God and he hasn't done anything to help others and he could have purchased souls for eternity," as chapter 16 will point out, "and spent all eternity enjoying the fruit of that generosity and he has no thought for his mortality." And here he's dead. Before he could ever realize any of his greedy plans, he was gone. You never saw a hearse pulling a U-Haul. You can't take it with you, it doesn't go. And if you haven't sent it on ahead somehow, you're a fool. If you haven't used what God does give you for His glory and for the benefit of others, and if you haven't dealt with your own mortality and prepared for eternity, you're a fool. If you give it to God, it will be there to welcome you. If you've invested in His Kingdom, Jesus said, "Lay not up treasure for yourselves on earth, but lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven where moth and rust do not corrupt and where thieves don't break through and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." You can reverse that. "If your heart's there, that's where your treasure will go." It will go...it will invest in your family, it will invest in the Kingdom work, it will invest in the needs of others because that's where your heart is.

How foolish to be a materialist, be greedy, covetous, self-indulgent, to horde what you have and leave it all behind. So is the man who lays up treasure for himself. It's not about how much you have, it's what you do with it.

I'll close with a couple of personal illustrations. It was some number of years ago we were on a cruise, Patricia and I, with some Grace To You people and cruising in Alaska and we had met a wonderful man by the name of Thaddaeus who was from Germany and who had been a very successful businessman and he had recently come to Christ. And he was so excited in his new found faith in Christ, I think he was what, honey, in his late fifties, or early sixties, and he was on the boat with his wife and he just couldn't get enough of the Word of God and it was all so rich and new to him. And about half-way in the cruise he pulled me aside and he said, "You know, I've saved money for my retirement but...he said...you know, I've spent all my money all my life on myself and I just...I just need to change all that. So I just want to give all that to you to give to Grace To You." And it was hundreds of thousands of dollars...a huge amount of money.

And I said, "Well are you sure you want to do that?"

He said, "You know, I just want to do that. I've indulged myself enough and the Lord will take care of me."

And I thought, he must have been reading Luke 12:30, Luke 12:30 for all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek, but your Father knows that you need these things, but seek for His Kingdom and these things shall be added. Don't be afraid, little flock, it's your Father who has gladly chosen to give you the Kingdom." And his heart was in heaven and that's where he wanted to send his soul.

I said, "Well that's wonderful."

And he said, "Well that's what I'm going to do, just going to give all that I've prepared for my retirement to the Lord."

It was just a little while after that on the cruise that he had a heart attack. They took him down to the bottom of the ship where they have a medical facility and tried to care for him and it was obvious they had to get him fast to Vancouver, we were on our way back. And they went through the last part of the passage, the inside passage at warp speed, dodging islands at high speed, the fastest the boat could go to get him back. He went back, I spent a few days with him in Vancouver in the hospital while they cared for him in critical care. They got him stable enough to send him to Houston. I went down, Patricia and I went down to Houston and were there when they tried to do a heart transplant and he went to heaven. And that was what? Only a few weeks after the cruise was over? And it was

so wonderful because he didn't know what his future was, but he made perfect plans for it, didn't he? His future was in the presence of the Lord and he made that investment in God's Kingdom.

I remember another 70-year-old man that sat down with me and told me the similar story that he had been led to Christ by his son who was a graduate of our seminary here. And he felt that he had spent his whole life making money for himself and he wanted to give, I think it was a million dollars, to the Lord's work and so I said, "Okay, that's good." This was a few years ago and a third of it came to the church, and a third of it went to the Master's College, and a third of it went to Grace To You. And it was very soon after that that he went to heaven. And that investment is till going on.

But when I thought about this, I couldn't help but think about our dear friends, Bob and Sharon Keene who have been gone I think now about a year, part of our church for so many, many years, beloved by so many in our church family. And in an incredible providential work of God, He took them both to heaven for different reasons, a heart attack and cancer in a very brief span of time, weeks apart. Bob had been caring for Sharon who had this cancer. Bob, as far as we knew, was healthy, fell over dead on the wheel of his car. And then a few weeks later Sharon went to heaven. And I was familiar with their home and their possessions but when they were gone, it was all still there. Nothing went. It was all still there. And Patricia was there and I was there, my sister and a lot of folks were trying to help and dispense with all of this. It was the end. There were no children, there was no one to leave this to. And the house was then bought by two homosexuals which would have been horrific for them to have seen or known. But what was really wonderful was that the proceeds from the sale of these things and from the sale of the house and all that the Lord had provided for Bob, He had prepared so that at his going it would all go to the Master's Seminar, two and a half-million dollar estate to provide scholarships for future preachers. Now that is putting your treasure where your heart is, isn't it?

Now not all of us by any stretch of the imagination have that kind of stewardship. Bob was a very frugal guy and he had planned well. And you need to do some good planning with terms of estates and wills and trusts and all of that, but you don't need to wait until you die to do all that, and certainly Bob and Sharon didn't, they were generous all the time. You just need to invest where the investment needs to be and you remember this, when you have more than you need, the first consideration is not a bigger barn, the first consideration is toward God and toward others. And be sure you've cared for your own mortality. The reality is, folks, you probably aren't going to live long enough to use it all. And if that's the case, be rich toward God. That's a synonym for laying up treasure in heaven. You can be seduced in the immaterial spiritual realm, or the material physical realm, or you can rise above both. Thank God that we know the truth. Thank God that we see our possessions and the richness that God has provided for us as a gift from Him to be given back to be held as a stewardship to be invested in His Kingdom and for His glory. Let's pray.

Father, we do thank You that You give us opportunity to make choices in life that honor You. But we know that apart from Christ they'd all be bad choices. So thank You for saving us, redeeming us, giving us Your Word and Your Spirit to inform us, to lead us, to direct us, to direct us toward loving You, loving others, to direct us toward an eternal view toward putting up treasure in heaven where we can enjoy it forever. You have made this world a place that produces immense beauty, wonder and riches and treasure so that we might enjoy it, and thank You for it, but at the same time that we might invest it back with You. I just pray, Lord, that there would be no one here who hasn't made that most important of all investments and that is to invest their eternal soul with You by faith in Christ so as to take care of that mortality which is so real. We don't know how long we'll live. We don't know how many days we have. How important it is to be rich toward you in terms of our own souls, and then rich toward You in terms of our investment in the spiritual needs of others and in Your Kingdom work and the expansion of the gospel. Thank You that this morning we have even an opportunity to share in the needs of some people half a world away. Again we commend the Word of God to our own hearts unto obedience for Your honor in Christ's name.

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