

Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”

¹⁴ Jesus replied, “Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?”

¹⁵ Then he said to them, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.”

¹⁶ And he told them this parable: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. ¹⁷ He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’

¹⁸ “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. ¹⁹ And I’ll say to myself, “You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.” ’

²⁰ “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?’

²¹ “This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.” (Luke 12:13-21)

You Are Rich

It had been a good year. Ah, who’s he kidding? It was a great year. He hadn’t ever seen such a harvest. It was so great he didn’t have enough space to keep it all. So he does what any pragmatic farmer will do. There’s nothing wrong with his plan. He’s being a good manager. He’s being a good steward. He’s taking care of his stuff. He’s going to tear down the old barns so he can build bigger and better. He has his whole plan set. Once that’s all taken care of he will say to himself, “**Self, I have everything I need. Take life easy; eat, drink, and be merry.**” And why shouldn’t he? Relaxation is good. Enjoying the work of one’s labor is good. As far as he was concerned, he would be able to retire early and enjoy the best years of his life! That is until he hears God say: “**You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?**” Jesus goes on to explain, “**This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.**” He had it all, except the most important. He was secure; but in the end it was all just meaningless.

This is Jesus’ response to the situation in Luke 12. A crowd of many thousands had gathered trampling each other to hear Jesus when one person speaks out:

“**Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.**” Maybe his brother had cheated him. Maybe the portion of the inheritance wasn’t quite fair. Maybe it was correct, but this individual didn’t think it was right and was being selfish. We aren’t told the underlying issues that brought this man’s demand to Jesus. But he seems to figure that this guy Jesus speaks with authority; therefore, if this guy tells my brother that he should divide it, he will have to listen.

But Jesus doesn't allow himself to be caught up with this at all. It's not his place. Of course he could have said something; but that's not why he is here. **“Man, who appointed me judge and divider of stuff!”** Instead, Jesus addresses the real issue not just for this man who feels cheated but for all people. **“Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.”**

Watch out! Be on your guard. How many family relationships have been ruined because of disagreements with the inheritance? The weed of greed, if it's not ripped out, quickly grows and spreads. This greed is never quenched. It's never satisfied. It tells you that once you have this then it will be enough. But it's like drinking salt water—greed always thirsts for more.

More often than not when we think of greed or someone being greedy, we think of money, wealth and people who already have a lot of it. Those ones need to be watching out and being on guard. But even the completely broke with barely two pennies to his name can be greedy. After receiving the third penny you can bet he would thirst for more and more because his issue is the same as the man in Luke 12, the man in Jesus' parable, and us by nature.

Oh, but the man in Jesus' parable does seem satisfied. He's happy and content, ready to kick up his feet and relax. So what's the issue? God had blessed him but instead of finding his security in the giver, he placed it in his stuff. He sees his life, his identity, his purpose in what he possesses. Here is what he fear, loves, and trusts above all things.

And so Jesus warns us because God has so richly blessed us too. If you are like me, you stood in front of a closet full of clothes trying to figure out what you wanted to wear today. I drive a car with air conditioning so I'm relatively comfortable on these hot days. There's food in the fridge with more stored in the pantry. I walk around with a device in my pocket that I can contact someone at a moment's notice. I loathe the thought of ever having to move because God has given me so much stuff and I don't want to pack it. Maybe it's in different ways, but God has richly bless you too!

And still we want more. How quickly we find ourselves caught up in the rat race of this world that we need this stuff or that stuff to truly be satisfied. So we fill up our lives with more hours worked, time used, and energy spent to try and get that stuff. Then we tell ourselves one day down the road we might be able to rest and relax.

How easily we listen to that empty-promise that once you have achieved this stuff then you will have made it. So we fill up our barns with the trophies of accomplishments achieved, goals crossed off the list, and experiences we enjoy.

We want to fill up with praises from him that you did a good job and the satisfaction that you fulfilled her expectations.

How often we find ourselves jealous of someone else's stuff because it's not our stuff. We tell ourselves we don't want much, otherwise we would be greedy—we just want a little more, a little extra to be more comfortable. But no matter how you dress it up, that can still be greedy. And that's the great lie of greed: once you have *this* and as long as you have this then you will be secure.

You fool! It's all meaningless—a chasing after the wind; you are trying to catch something you can't! Meaningless—mist from your mouth on a cold winter morning that's gone as quickly as it came. It's one of the devil's greatest tricks. He takes the blessings that God has given to us to enjoy and focuses our eyes on this stuff. Rather than chasing after the Creator we run after more stuff. But there's always more work to do and different stuff to add to the collection. Instead of praising the giver we demand more gifts to fill up the gaping God-sized hole in our lives. But then when we don't have those things, we are frustrated, angry, maybe even feel like a failure. And still we do it because this stuff is what you can see. This stuff fuels our pride in self that wants to measure yourself against someone else. You can look back at this solid stuff and say, "See what I have done. There's the proof I need to ease my mind. At least I've been a hard worker, good parent, dependable individual." Well good that you have been! But in the end, it's all meaningless. For most of us in two-three generations your hard work will be forgotten. When you die, all that stuff you gathered over all the years will either be sold or given away in a day. Meaningless.

Watch out. Be on your Guard. Greed is a deadly thing chasing after the wind trying to find security, meaning, and purpose in things that cannot give what this world promises. It takes the good things and turns them into what we are afraid of losing, placing our trust and security in them, loving more than the one true God. Sure, they might bring that security and meaning for some time, but life does not consist in an abundance of possessions. What good is it if you gain the whole world, yet forfeit your soul?

So how do we do get rid of that greed? Jesus isn't saying that you need to go home and get rid of all your stuff. He isn't saying hole yourself up in the middle of nowhere to avoid all this stuff. The answer isn't coming from you doing. It comes from the very same one who loves you so much that he gives you this warning. Jesus pulls your eyes from yourself, from your stuff, to himself. He did not come to be judge or divider of things, he came to save you. **Though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich**

(2 Corinthians 8:9). This rich one who became poor for your sake did not have a place to lay his head so that he might gain for you a mansion in His Father's house. This rich one who became poor did not have servants waiting on him on earth though he had angels he could have called. No, for your sake he did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life to pay the price for your greedy heart. He would not allow himself to be caught up and distracted from his mission, but for your sake this rich one became poor with his face set on Calvary and the cross. There the one who had no sin claimed all your greed to be his own. He becomes the poorest of poor when God turns his back on him. He did it all not so that he could store up more or for his benefit; it was all for your sake that by his wounds you are healed. With the price of his blood, you are forgiven. With his life lived for you and his death in your place, you have peace with God. And with his rising from the dead, Jesus makes you rich.

In baptism your greedy heart was put to death with Jesus on the cross and from those waters you were raised with Christ a new creation. Daily we drown that greed heart when we confess our sin and rise rich in Jesus! You are rich in Jesus who gives himself fully and freely in the Lord's Supper with his body and blood in with and under the bread and wine. You are rich in the Father's love that will never fade or spoil or be taken away and still is given fresh and new and abundantly every morning. You are rich because the Father does not call you, "Fool." No, he calls you his daughter. He named you his son. You are rich in forgiveness—Jesus isn't about to tell you, "You've used your quota for the day." No, through his called servant you hear Jesus' voice proclaim: "You are forgiven." You are rich in life! This world is not the end for you, dear child of God. Because Jesus lives, you also will live.

This Jesus pushes out the greed while he fills you with himself. He shows he is God and Lord over all and all your stuff in your life is just that: stuff. At the same time, they are blessings from God. Enjoy them; that's why God gave them to you. Don't feel guilty or ashamed that you are blessed. Be thankful. Use it to serve your neighbor. Be a blessing to your church. Be rich in Christ as he fills you up with Word and Sacrament. Life does not consist in abundance of stuff. At the same time, you are already are rich not necessarily because of your retirement plan or stuff in your house. You are rich not necessarily because of the accomplishments and life goals you've reached. You are rich because you have been raised with him Christ, you are baptized, you are forgiven, and by faith that he works and sustains Christ who is all in you. Amen.