

Building A Bigger Barn?

Luke 12:13-21

Writers have a class of words that can often brighten their writing when used correctly. They are called *onomatopoeia*. These are words whose sounds reflect their meaning. For example, *buzz*, *bubbling*, *hiss*, *jangle*, and *crackle* all sound like their meaning. You can almost hear the *hissing* snake ready to strike or feel the heat from the *crackling* fire.

In one of Jesus' parables recorded in Luke there's a story about a rich farmer who had such a bountiful harvest one year that he had no where to store it all. Thinking that it would be that way forever, he decided to tear down all his old barns and build bigger ones — then live a life of ease.

As Jesus introduces the story, he cautions his followers to be on guard against "*all kinds of greed*." Greed is one of those *onomatopoeic* words. You can't hardly say it without gritting your teeth. It has a sinister and disturbing sound to it doesn't it? Maybe because that's what greed is — SINister and disturbing.

Luke tells us that thousands had gathered to hear Jesus as he taught about the kingdom of God, the Son of Man and the Holy Spirit — so many that they were "*trampling on one another*" (Lk. 12:1). He was never more popular with the people or more in disdain with the Pharisees.

¹³Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." ¹⁴Jesus replied, "Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?"

The law of Moses gave the general rule that an elder son was to receive double a younger one's portion of a family estate upon death of the father (Dt. 21:17). Disputes over the law in such matters were normally settled by rabbis. This man's request, however, appears to be selfish and materialistic, especially in light of what Jesus had been teaching. Obviously he felt that he hadn't received enough. Jesus makes it clear that he would not become a party to the dispute but he does use the request to issue a strong warning

to his followers.

¹⁵Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

Greed is often listed as one of the seven deadly sins. It's a strong desire or passion for material wealth or gain, while ignoring the realm of the spiritual. It is also called covetousness. The word for greed is a compound word in the Greek language meaning, "one who is eager to have more."

You may remember a bumper sticker a few years back that read "Whoever dies with the most toys, wins." It was a testimony about our capitalistic system. Today we hear a lot about our economy being "consumer driven," meaning that the more things we all buy, on credit or otherwise, the better our economy will be. The problem is that most of our buying is on credit, leading to a national personal indebtedness, other than housing, of \$1.6 trillion dollars and personal bankruptcies at an all time high.

Even now, in the face of our slumping economy and the tragic events of September 11, we're being exhorted to "spend money — buy things," as if it was our patriotic duty. But the question I want to pose to you today, in light of Jesus' parable is : Do we really need to buy more things just to have more things? Jesus said that our life is not measured by how many things we have. Then how is it measured?

¹⁶And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. ¹⁷He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.'

I remember when I first went away to school to study for the ministry. My first part time job was in a grain elevator in Clovis, NM. I started right at the beginning of the harvest season which, in that particular year was the largest in a decade. They ran out of space in all of the grain elevators

in the area so they just dumped the corn, oats, barley and wheat on the ground until they could begin shipping it out by box car. There was no other place to put it.

18Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.

The grain elevators in towns like Clovis are like banks. The farmer can deposit his grain, borrow against his stored crop, sell it off or keep it stored and play the market to see if the prices would go up. Because the crop was so bountiful the first year I was there, I still remember hearing the farmers talk about building more silos on their property in which to keep their future harvests, so that they wouldn’t have to worry about where to store their crops. Some of them probably did — at great expense. It’s ironic but the next year I also remember that the harvest was terrible and many farmers were so indebted that they couldn’t pay off their loans. Many went broke.

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

Now Jesus relates this parable in the context of his warning to us about greed or the pursuit of having more things. So I pose this question to all of us, “Is the goal of our life to get to a place where we can just kick back and “*Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry?*” Some of you may already be at that place. Some of you may laugh, considering your present economic status and say, “I sure don’t have to worry about that now!” But is that your goal in life?

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!’

Notice the selfishness indicated in this whole story. In verse 17, it’s “*my crops.*” In verse 18, it’s “*my barns . . . my grain . . . my goods.*” There was no room in his life for God, his family or his community — and Jesus calls this rich man a “*fool.*” Literally the word means “senseless one.” In my own life, I have been deeply affected by the horrible scenes of the attack on our country. I know you have been as well. All of a sudden, the quest for the abundance of possessions that tempt us all have very little pull right now. I have been reminded once again that life is short at best and can end in a moment of time. The question on my mind and hopefully yours is, “Will I be found faithful and serving God with all of my beings, when my life ends.” That’s all that matters. Everything else is temporal.

21This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things

for himself but is not rich toward God.

How do we become “*rich toward God*”? We must set our minds on heavenly things and Jesus tells us how in the following verses. Let me read them without comment as none is probably needed at this point.

22Then Jesus said to his disciples: “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. 23Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. 24Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! 25Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? 26Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?”

27Consider how the lilies grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 28If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! 29And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. 30For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. 31But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.

32Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. 33Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. 34For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

The apostle Paul, writing to Timothy, who was his companion and a new pastor in Ephesus gave these instructions, “*But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.*”

We don’t need a bigger barn beloved. What we need is a bigger heart for God’s work. He’ll let us know when it’s time to kick back. He’ll take us home! *Maranatha.*

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