

## The Heart's Treasure

*A heart that is rich toward God is safe for eternity.*

### Luke 12: 13 – 34

***“Someone in the crowd said to him, ‘Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.’<sup>14</sup> Jesus replied, ‘Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?’<sup>15</sup> Then 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.’<sup>16</sup> And he told them this parable: ‘The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop.<sup>17</sup> He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’<sup>18</sup> Then he said, ‘This is what I will do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.<sup>19</sup> And I’ll say to myself, ‘You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.’<sup>20</sup> 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?’<sup>21</sup> This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God.’<sup>22</sup> Then 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.<sup>23</sup> Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes.<sup>24</sup> Consider 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!<sup>25</sup> Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?<sup>26</sup> Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?<sup>27</sup> Consider 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.<sup>28</sup> If 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!<sup>29</sup> And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it.<sup>30</sup> For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them.<sup>31</sup> But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.<sup>32</sup> Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.<sup>33</sup> Sell 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.<sup>24</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.’***

While there are enough themes to explore in this passage to fill more than a month of sermons, it was the very last verse that caught my attention. ***‘For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.’***

I thought, what *does* my heart treasure? It made me wonder, what is my heart most attached to? If I were to do a heart-check right now, I’m afraid that I would be disappointed at the things that are taking up the most space in my heart. What about you?

When the man in the crowd spoke up, it was clear where the focus his heart was. He wanted Jesus to help him get the inheritance he thought he deserved.

He was fixated on not letting his brother cheat him. He was preoccupied with *'getting'* his father's inheritance, and it appears his *'brother'* was set on *'keeping'* it. I'm sure we've all experienced how emotional it can get when it comes to settling estates.

Now, Jesus had just finished talking to the crowd about the importance of following God if they wanted to spend eternity with Him. This man had either come in late or completely missed the point of Jesus' message, because obviously, *'greed'*, and *not* thoughts of heaven, was consuming his mind and his heart.

Perhaps that's the reason why this particular man was in the crowd that day. Jews were used to coming to rabbis to settle arguments about the Law. But Jesus quickly told him that he wasn't interested in getting involved in those kinds of disputes.

He replied to the man so that everyone could hear, ***'Watch out! Be on guard against all kinds of greed: a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.'*** The word Jesus used for *'life'*, *'zoe'* (zo-ay), meant more than a breathing, walking, flesh and blood life. Jesus meant *'life'* in a spiritual sense, as in one's *'soul'* does not find its worth in *'things.'*

In response to the man's request, Jesus told a parable. The *'rich man'* in Jesus' story had a dilemma. He did not know what to do with his overflowing harvest. His fields had produced more than his barns could hold. I'm sure many of his neighbors would have liked to have his sort of problem!

In his own mind, he was being *'smart'*, by building bigger barns so that he would have enough income to last for *'many years.'* He felt secure in knowing that his financial cushion would allow him to ***'take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.'***

Planning for retirement is a prudent and wise investment, for sure. But the problem the *'rich man'* had was that he had more than enough to live comfortably. The *'rich man'* had spent much effort to accumulate wealth for selfish reasons. It seemingly never occurred to him to share his surplus crop with his neighbors or someone else who might really need it.

The *'rich man'* was living for himself and for whatever pleasure he could buy and gave God none of the credit for what he had.

Who is it who really gives us everything we have? I'll give you a clue. It isn't us. Psalm 24 reminds us that ***'The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it.'*** (Psalm 24:1)

Jesus called the *'rich man'* a *'fool,'* not because he was rich; that is not a sin, but because he wrongly thought that he was in control of his destiny and left God out of his plans. The *'rich man'* had placed his trust in *'things'* when he should have been thinking about investing in eternity.

The *'rich man'* didn't realize that his wealth belonged, not to him, but to God. He also didn't realize that *his life* also belonged to God. The rest of the verse in Psalm 24 says, ***'The world and all its people belong to (God).'*** I'm not sure we remember that often enough either.

Realizing that everything we have, including each day of our life, are gifts given to us by God, should change our perspective on life, don't you think? Moses realized how precious every day was and prayed to God, ***'Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a***

**heart of wisdom.'** (Psalm 90:12) Everyday, God gives us the opportunity to decide how we will use what He has blessed us with.

While this wasn't intended to be a lesson on '**Stewardship**', it really is, isn't it? Certainly, our decisions should be different, knowing that our life is really on loan from God. Imagine how different our lives would be if we shared everything that God has given us.

There's no medical device I know of that is able to look into our hearts and spot '**greed**'. But clearly, Jesus knew that craving for '**things**' can prevent a person from inheriting eternal life.

If we truly want to examine the priorities of our hearts, we just need to take a close look at our bank statements. They plainly expose the truth about how we spend our treasure.

Every month at our house we receive the dreaded VISA bill. We spread it out on the kitchen counter and inspect every single purchase. It is very sobering to admit how little is spent on '**eternal treasure**.'

It's also a humbling experience to examine my calendar and see how I've spent the hours and days that God has given me. How about you?

The '**rich man**' was hoarding his crop because he didn't trust God with his future. Not that it isn't important to work to provide a living for ourselves and for our family. But spending too much time worrying about material things often causes us to lose sight of the much more important goal, which is to be '**rich toward God**.'

There's a story told about a well-known pastor in Texas, who was invited to the home of a wealthy rancher. Hoping to impress the minister, the rancher pointed to the surrounding countryside. He said, '*Twenty-five years ago, there was nothing out there. Now, as far as you can see, it's all mine.*' The rancher pointed out all the oil wells and then his fields full of grain. He said, '*It's all mine.*' Then he pointed out his enormous herds of cattle and said, '*They're all mine.*' He also bragged about the huge forests he owned: '*I own it all*'. And then the minister turned to the rancher, pointed up to heaven, and said, '*How much do you have in that direction?*'<sup>1</sup>

Being '**rich in God**' means investing in God and in His Kingdom. When we shift the desires of our hearts from serving our own self toward serving God's purposes, we will be headed in the right direction.

Jesus helps us get started by telling us to '**seek first His kingdom**.' Hearts that are focused on God won't allow greed to grow.

If something is preoccupying your time and your mind, just pause and ask yourself, '*Is there an eternal benefit in this?*' So much of what we worry about eats up our time and energy and causes anxiety and has so little eternal value.

I should have preached this message earlier, because recently I lost sleep over what color to paint our house. I spent so much time going to paint stores and comparing paint samples. Our garage is full of little '**test**' cans of paint. I'm pretty sure that the Kingdom will not be affected one way or the other by the color of our house.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://thepreachersword.com/2013/10/21/word-of-the-week-spiritual/>  
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Jesus promised in his teaching that we don't need to worry about *'things,'* like ***'what we will eat or drink, or what we will wear.'*** He assures us that our Father in heaven, who clothes the ***lilies of the field*** and ***feeds the birds in the sky,*** will also take care of all our needs.

When my mother was downsizing her house and moving into an apartment, I thought she would be more emotional about getting rid of her things. She put tags on things, so that after she was gone, we would know who would get what.

She kept saying to me, ***'Remember they are just 'things'. Don't let 'things' drive a wedge in the family.'***

Not that we can't enjoy our lives and everything in it, but we are to *'hold loosely'* to our possessions.

Paul wrote something similar to the Corinthian church. He said, ***'Do not be absorbed by your possessions; do not become attached to the things of this world, for this world will soon pass away.'*** (1 Corinthians 7:30 – 31)

It's important that we never let our *'things'* define us, or anyone else. All that we have is *'on loan'* to us. Our *'things'* won't go into eternity with us.

There is, however, something that will go with us, Jesus said. It is our ***'treasure.'*** I admit I've had a hard time visualizing what kind of ***'treasure'*** Jesus wants us to ***'store up in heaven'***.

Some think that our ***'treasure'*** in heaven is the good deeds we've done for God's Kingdom. Some think that our ***'treasure'*** will be the *'crowns'* and *'rewards'* we are promised in heaven for our faithful service to God. (1 Peter 5:4; 2 Timothy 4:8)

To be honest with you, I don't want to wear crowns and get rewards. Just to be with God and Jesus in glory, with all the other believers is enough for me!

The word Jesus used for ***'treasure'*** means a vault or something we keep precious things in, like a ***'treasure'*** chest. What things are most precious to us? Our family? Our home? Our health? All of those things are very important; we certainly want to keep them safe.

But the treasure we must never crowd out of our lives is Jesus.

When Jesus has first place in our hearts, our lives will have *'Kingdom vision'*. We will not be selfish with our time or talent or treasure. We will be glad to use what we can to contribute to God's purposes. ***'Whatever we do, we will do it all for the glory of God.'*** (1 Corinthians 10: 31 – 33)

When we honor Jesus as the Lord of our life, we can be certain that he holds our heart and our soul safe in the vault of heaven for all eternity. Amen.