

PARABLE: RICH FOOL

Luke 12:13-23

STRUCTURE

Key-persons: Jesus, and the man who interrupted him; in the parable: the rich man

Key-location: Region of Perea

Key-repetitions:

- Life: life does not consist in possessions (Lk 12:15); don't worry about life (Lk 12:23); life is more than food and clothes (Lk 12:23).
- Possessions: life does not consist in having possessions (Lk 12:15); man's farm, crops, and barn (Lk 12:16); bigger barns (Lk 12:18); good things stored up (Lk 12:18-19); a fool stores up material riches for himself, but is not rich in God's sight (Lk 12:21).
- Inheritance: one brother wanted his share of the inheritance (Lk 12:13); God asked the rich man who would get what he accumulated after his death (Lk 12:21).

Key-attitudes:

- Brother's greed, anger, arrogance, and impatience as he interrupted Jesus.
- Rich man's satisfaction with possessions.
- Rich man's foolish arrogance.

Initial-situation:

Jesus' third year of public ministry began when King Herod ordered the murder of John the Baptist. The people were furious with King Herod. After Jesus multiplied the bread and fish and fed 5,000 men, the people wanted to annihilate King Herod and crown Jesus. When Jesus refused the people's demand to lead a popular revolution, the people felt betrayed by Jesus. That ended his popularity with the multitudes. The religious leaders' antagonism toward Jesus increased. The people flip-flopped between excitement for Jesus when he performed a miracle, and anger toward Jesus when they didn't like his teaching.

Jesus made three trips to Jerusalem to participate in three religious feasts during the second half of his third year of ministry. The first trip was for the Feast of the Tabernacles. During the Feast, there was conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders. On the Sabbath after the Feast, Jesus healed a man who had been born blind. That created a conflict with the Pharisees. Jesus then declared himself to be the Good Shepherd. After the Feast of the Tabernacles, it is assumed Jesus went to the region of Perea.

Initial-problem:

Thousands of people gathered and Jesus began teaching. Someone in the crowd interrupted Jesus saying, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance and give me my share of what our father left us."

Final-situation:

Jesus told his disciples, "Don't worry about your life, what you will eat, nor worry about your body, what you will wear. Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothes."

BIBLE STORY

Thousands of people gathered and Jesus began teaching (Lk 12:1).

Someone in the crowd interrupted Jesus saying, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance and give me my share of what our father left us."

Jesus replied, "Man, who appointed me a judge or a mediator between you?" Then Jesus told the people, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed. A person's life does not consist in having a lot of material possessions" (Lk 12:13-15).

Then Jesus told the people this parable, "The farm of a certain rich man produced good crops. The rich man thought, 'What shall I do? My barns aren't big enough to store my crops.'

"Then the rich man said, 'I know what I'll do. I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones. I'll store all my grain and my goods in those bigger barns. I'll say to myself, 'You have plenty of good things stored up for many years. Now you can retire, take life easy; eat, drink, and enjoy yourself.'

"God told the rich man, 'You fool! Tonight you die. Who will get the wealth you accumulated for yourself?'"

Jesus told the people, "This is how it will be with anyone who stores up material riches for himself but is not rich in God's sight" (Lk 12:16-21).

Jesus told his disciples, "Therefore, I tell you, don't worry about your life, what you'll eat, nor worry about your body, what you'll wear. Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothes" (Lk 12:22-23).

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

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| 1. What catches your attention in the story? | 5. How did the characters face their problems? |
| 2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand? | 6. How have you faced similar problems? |
| 3. Who are the main characters in the story? | 7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you? |
| 4. What problems did the characters face? | 8. What does the story tell about God? |

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What was the root of the concern of the man who interrupted Jesus?
2. Why was Jesus unwilling to interrupt his teaching in order to become a judge or arbitrator between the two brothers?
3. In the parable, what did Jesus say about wealth and the pursuit of wealth?

4. In the parable, why was God's response to the rich man so harsh?
5. How does a person become rich in God's sight?
6. What did Jesus say was the point of his parable?
7. How can a person honor God with his wealth?

LIFE-LESSONS

1. **The main lesson of the parable of the Rich Fool is that this life and this world's goods are both temporary** (Lk 12:13-21).
2. **Life is so much more than storing up material riches.** Jesus warned his listeners to be on guard against all kinds of greed because a person's life does not consist in having a lot of material possessions (Lk 12:15). People should not give priority in their lives to gathering and accumulating wealth. God asked the man in the story, "Tonight you die. Who will get what you accumulated for yourself?" (Lk 12:20). This echoes the thought expressed in Ecclesiastes 2:18 that the worker will leave his possessions to someone else. If money is a person's master, that means God is not (Mat 6:24).
3. **Christians need to guard themselves against all kinds of greed.** Jesus warned against "all kinds of greed" (Lk 12:15). This suggests that greed has a variety of forms. Some kinds of greed tempt the rich who want more than they have. Other kinds of greed tempt the less affluent who desire wealth.
4. **Life does not consist in possessions.** Jesus told his listeners that a person's life does not consist in having a lot of material possessions (Lk 12:15). Even if a person could amass a large accumulation of possessions, it would not produce life.
5. **People should resist pressure to turn away from their calling to take on other tasks.** Jesus, as a teacher, refused to turn from his calling as a teacher to function as a judge, which was not his task. Jesus refused to act as a judge or an arbitrator between these two brothers. It was not because he was incapable of doing so, but it was not his calling. Jesus did use the man's interruption as a "teachable moment." In this situation, Jesus was the teacher, not the judge.
6. **A person's definition of "life" determines how he will live his life.** For some, life consists in having a lot of material possessions (Lk 12:15). Some view life as being happy; some view life as being successful; some view life as having power or position. Whatever it is that constitutes "life" for a person, that thing becomes his god. That is why covetousness (or greed), seeking things as our ultimate good and goal, is called idolatry. (See Colossians 3:5.) Whatever is or becomes a god becomes that for which a person will sacrifice all else.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1. **Small Sharing Groups:**

Invite listeners to interact with the story in small groups. Have the listeners divide into groups of three or four people for a half of five minutes. Invite each person to share briefly with his small groups:

- Jesus said that a person's life does not consist in having a lot of possessions. What is priority in your life?
- How are you rich?

2. **Chant:**

The storyteller will tell the story one time. Then the storyteller will:

- Teach listeners the chant: "Life does not consist in having a lot of material possessions."
- Give listeners a hand signal that is a sign for them to repeat the chant while the story is retold.
- Retell the story, giving listeners the signal to chant at the appropriate places.

Teller:

Someone in the crowd interrupted Jesus saying, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance and give me my share of what our father left us."

Jesus replied, "Man, who appointed me a judge or a mediator between you?" Then Jesus told the people, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed. A person's life does not consist in having a lot of material possessions" (Lk 12:13-15).

Listeners chant: Life does not consist in having a lot of material possessions.

Teller:

Then Jesus told the people this parable, "The farm of a certain rich man produced a good crop. The rich man thought, 'What shall I do? My barn isn't big enough to store my crops.'"

Listeners chant: Life does not consist in having a lot of material possessions.

Teller:

"Then the rich man said, 'I know what I'll do. I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones. I'll store all my grain and my goods in those bigger barns. I'll say to myself, 'You have plenty of good things stored up for many years. Now you can retire, take life easy, eat, drink, and enjoy yourself.'"

Listeners chant: Life does not consist in having a lot of material possessions.

Teller:

"God told the rich man, 'You fool! Tonight you die. Who will get the wealth you accumulated for yourself?'"

Jesus told the people, "This is how it will be with anyone who stores up material riches for himself, but is not rich in God's sight" (Lk 12:16-21).

Listeners chant: Life does not consist in having a lot of material possessions.

Teller:

Jesus told his disciples, "Therefore, I tell you: Don't worry about your life, what you will eat, nor worry about your body, what you will wear. Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothes" (Lk 12:22-34).

Listeners chant: "Life does not consist in having a lot of material possessions."