



HG230: Parables And Possessions The Parable Of The Rich Fool

Luke 12:13-34

Home Group Study Notes

24 October 2021 - Pauline Woolnough



PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN
ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION
BEFORE THE MEETING!

*Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group
with you, along with any previous notes and other
resources which might be helpful for your discussions.*



Welcome (10 mins)
Ice Breaker

Your house is on fire and you have to get out quick, what treasure do you try take with you before the flames engulf you?



Looking Upwards (10 mins)
Worship

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...



HG220: Parables And Possessions The Parable Of The Rich Fool

Luke 12:13-34

Home Group Sermon Notes

24 October 2021 - Pauline Woolnough

Introduction

As we have seen again recently through the revelations in the recent Pandora Papers, the rich and powerful have advantages that the rest of us don't. Some rich people prefer not to pay their taxes for the benefit of everyone and keep all or more of their money for themselves and it's easy to hear the Lord say to those who do so, v 20 "You Fool...." but we don't get off the hook so easily ourselves because of course we are all rich to someone who has a lot less than we do so this story is for all of us as Jesus talks about material possessions and their place in our lives. In this parable he talks a lot about life. In the first half about life in the present and about how often we live it, and then goes on to talk about how we should live. Free from worrying about our material needs and about how our view of wealth and providing for ourselves affects our preparation for eternal life. Essentially Jesus is interested in the state of our hearts and our leaning towards God and his Kingdom. The attitude of the Rich Fool was always to acquire more for himself, which of course is the reverse of Christianity and of our role model Jesus Christ.

Be On Your Guard

Jesus first addresses those who have lots after someone in the crowd who had suffered a bereavement shouted out, v13 "Teacher tell my brother to divide the inheritance." What a strange thing to be thinking about at such a time, his father had most likely died and at a time when family would normally be grieving and supporting each other, what concerned him most was a problem he had with his brother, what was going to happen to the inheritance, and where was his share.

It wasn't uncommon for people to take their disputes to respected Rabbis at the time but Jesus refused to get involved and replied, v 14 "who appointed me to be a judge or arbiter between you?" The Jews thought that the Messiah's Kingdom was an earthly kingdom and Jesus did not want to endorse this error so he would not get involved in petty family conflicts about material possessions. Had he given advice on this occasion he may have been inundated with other people wanting help with disputes and disagreements.

Instead Jesus gives a warning to, v15 "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions" and he told this parable known as The Rich Fool to show how foolish it is when we stash away treasures for ourselves and we are not rich towards God. It's worth noting though that Jesus warns us against all kinds of greed and that could cover such things as being greedy about our time, our approval, giving love, sharing our knowledge, or many other things. These are all symptoms of the deeper issue which is about the condition of the heart and the way we deal with the emptiness inside and our feelings of not being enough. When we feel deficient and we believe we are not enough we try to fill that empty hole inside ourselves with things and other people.

Life Is About More Than Possessions

So the first thing Jesus talks about is our stuff and tells about a man who has had such a great harvest that his barns are not big enough to store all of the crop so he decides to tear his barns down and build new bigger ones.

He was the beneficiary of common grace, in other words those things that God does for us even if we are not a Christian. The Fool believes that the bumper crop stored in the bigger barns will secure his future, he can relax, he will be well provided for years to come and he can get on with enjoying life, there's money in the bank so he can, v19 "eat drink and be merry." He never saw beyond this life planning only for his life on earth and securing his treasure in his barns. The Fool already had barns able to store enough for himself, he could have given away the excess, but enough for himself was not enough, he wanted more for himself.

The Fool had a great harvest, there's nothing wrong with that, it's what he decided to do with it that's the problem. He could have said to God, "I've got more than enough for myself, now who is most in need, who can I help?" but he didn't because his focus was on himself. He thought "what shall I do," he was thinking of "my crop," "my barns," "my good things." He was counting his blessings forgetting who it was who had blessed him. He showed no gratitude towards God and gave no thought to his mortality. At no time did he consider giving anything back to God from his good fortune or giving anyone else any of it. This wasn't something that God needed to be involved in let alone consulted about and sadly this can happen to all of us. Things are going well, life is good we have all and more than we need and although God is a part of our lives he can become our safety net, someone we need and turn to when times are not so good.

The Danger Of Presumption

This man thought that all his needs were taken care off, and he dangerously presumed that he had many years ahead to enjoy the benefit of his riches. v 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." It's not nice to be called a fool by anyone, at best you are a silly person, at worse and according to the Thesaurus, you are a buffoon, a nincompoop, a dunce, a blockhead a cretin and an imbecile... God ridiculed him for being a fool.

The Fool's Heart

How we handle our possessions show where our heart is and thing seeking leads to more thing seeking. When is enough? When does our amassing of wealth become idolatry and the gods that we worship. Idolatry by its very nature has a built in inflation factor and once we replace the one omnipotent God with lesser deities we eventually discover that it takes an infinite number of deities to fill the one true God. The Romans had a proverb that said that, "Money was like seawater. The more you drink the thirstier you become." We can have all the riches in the world and still not be satisfied, that's why St Augustine said, "Thou hast made us for thyself and our souls are restless until they find their rest in thee." Only fools think solely of themselves and forget about God and other people. Only fools concentrate on material needs and forget about their souls and only fools think solely about this world and forget about the next.

Richness Towards God

There's a lot of things we are happy to talk about but money is not one of them. Along with death it's a bit of a taboo subject. We're not keen on disclosing how much we have of it and we are less keen on someone telling us how to spend it. Tithing is the fairest system in the world because tithing is a percentage of what we have and God only asks for 10% of it.

A loaf of bread costs the same whether it is a poor man buying it or a rich man. If we give God his tenth and then use our 90% in ways that are responsible and pleasing to him then we are storing up treasure in heaven. We can't lose, it's a win situation but when we cannot give from what we have it shows that we believe that the treasures of this world are better than those of heaven. The Rich Fool forgot that all resources belonged to God and therefore came from God.

This is a reminder and a warning to us all that what we have is because of what God has given us and we need to give something back and be rich towards him. Ps 23.5 says "My cup overflows with blessings." God is always trying to give good things to us but sometimes our cups are too full up to receive them, we've filled up with other stuff and our eyes are elsewhere looking for another

kind of blessing and treasure but the things of life that hold the deepest meaning, value, and purpose are love, compassion, mercy, forgiveness, and justice and these cannot be stored up, they can only be given away. For those of us who are parents I expect that when you first laid eyes on your child the prayer you said over them didn't ask for their lives to be blessed with lots of money, a big house, or a new car every year, I think, like me you prayed that they would be healthy, safe, happy, have good loving relationships, that they would know the Lord Jesus as their Saviour and follow the call that He has on their lives rather than on the pursuit of perishable riches.

Life Is Wasted By Worry

So having told us how not to live Jesus goes on to tell us how we should live and he tells us to do the one thing that we all find difficult to do, he says v22, "don't worry about you life." I wish it was that easy, there is so much to worry about, our families, our health, our finances and that's just to start. Watch the news and they have us worrying about the increase in crime, food shortages, fuel shortages, staff shortages, whether we will eat turkey for Christmas, the pandemic, treatment waiting times, and the big one of course - climate change. Yet, Jesus tells us not to worry. He also goes on to tell us why worrying is pointless and of course it's something every worrier knows, worrying has no impact whatsoever on the thing we are worrying about. Jesus says, v25 "Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life."

Jesus gives us an illustration why we shouldn't worry using ravens saying that they do nothing to provide for themselves, they don't plant or harvest the crops yet year after year there is food for them because God provides for them and as we are much more valuable to him than the ravens are we can trust him to provide for us. Our worth to God is not determined by how useful we are to him or by how much we have. Walk down any High St and you will see a couple of homeless people, are they worth less to God because they have little, are we worth more to God than them because we have more?

But we can look at this passage and say to ourselves, "Ok that's all very well but I still need to work, what if I lose my job? What if there is another lockdown, what if prices keep going up and up, how will we manage?" But Jesus says, "can you add a single hour to your life by worrying?" God the Father is saying to us, when it comes to your life, "don't worry, I've got you." and He is inviting us to depend on him more and less on ourselves. We only have to look in our gardens for evidence of his care, the flowers and the grass are here today and gone tomorrow, they are short-lived, but God looks after his creation and he will look after us.

Seek First The Kingdom

The purpose of this life is to seek God and his Kingdom and the mystery of life is that when we do he provides for us and in place of worry, we receive Him and his Kingdom, the reason being is that our greatest need is God. We may consider ourselves rich if we have everything money can buy but the simple fact is that without God, we have nothing, we are actually broke.

We were not created to live storing up lives or to be "storing up" people that simply is not the way or teaching of Jesus. He says, Matt 6.11 "And when you pray say, "Give us each day our daily bread." Not bread for a week, a month, or a lifetime, but bread for a day. It doesn't mean that we will never struggle or give in to the pull of the world and it doesn't mean that we are not disciples of Jesus when we fail because there will always be a struggle in this life and we will fail, there is a, "we're not quite there yet" aspect to the Christian life. We are saved but we are works in progress, but the point is that even though we battle with our earthly ambitions and desires and fail many times there ought to be in our hearts a desire for the glory of God and building up treasures that last in the Kingdom

The Real Treasure

v 32 "Jesus says, Don't worry little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom." What a gift, we are part owners of a royal kingdom, and he is delighted to give it to us, he holds nothing back, and once we understand and realise this, the material things of this world lose their hold on us, they are second rate substitutes and that's what Jesus goes on to say in v 33 "Sell

your possessions and give to the poor, provide purses for yourselves that won't wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted where no thief comes near and no moth destroys." This life is gone in the blink of an eye and we are simply stewards of what we have been given and blessed with. We are all on a journey in this life that leads to the next and in order to get through this one we need to be rich towards God and generous to those around us and in doing so we lay claim and take hold of life with him in the next.

So we can use what he gives us in this life to bless those in need because we are blessed. We have a kingdom given to us by God and the supreme gift of a Saviour who saves us from the judgement to come by making atonement for our sins. Hallelujah...That is our treasure. Jesus Christ is our treasure, the treasure we need to seek and where our hearts need to be fixed. He is our inheritance, the only one that can never be misspent, run out or taken away from us. Lam 3 22-24 "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness; "The Lord is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him." So don't worry about your life, rather entrust your care and future to him because he can be trusted. We have inherited Christ, and he has inherited us and no other inheritance is needed so, "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you." 1 Peter 5:7.

Close with some words by Charles de Foucauld, 19th century explorer, priest and martyr, he says this

*I place my soul in you, my God,
I give it to you my God.
With all the love of my heart
Because I love you.
And for me it is a necessity of love
This gift of myself,
This placing of myself in Your hands
Without reserve
In boundless confidence.
Because You are my Father.*

© Emmanuel Church, Billerica 2021

Emmanuel Church Text for 2021

*"We have this hope as an anchor for the soul,
firm and secure."*

Hebrews 6:19



Looking Upwards (40 mins)

Bible Study

Read the text for this study, and any references given, then answer the following questions. You may find it helpful to listen to the sermon and/or read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, your answers with your Home Group and, remember, these questions are only a guide to start your discussions.

1. Is your life marked by financial generosity towards those in need? Jesus here is blatantly commanding us to make this a priority in our lives. What individual items would you find most difficult to part with for the kingdom?

2. If the only information you had of your friends came from social media what would you think their lives were about? What would they think of you?

3. v 20 *“This very night your life is being demanded of you.”* What is demanding and taking your life today?

4. Out of all of lives trials and difficulties, what worries you most, how do you respond and how does Jesus want you to respond?

5. What may be the signs in your life that material security may be more important to you than trust in your Father in heaven?

6. What is it in Jesus' teaching here that challenges you the most?



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?

