

Sermon Notes – July 31, 2022

“Rich Toward God”

(Luke 12:13-21)

There was a comedian that lived years ago named Jack Benny and one time on his TV show he was walking down the street of a small town. He couldn't sleep that night. He got up and was walking down the street. He's by himself and as he's walking, an armed robber comes up behind him and sticks a gun in his back, and says, "Your money or your life?" Jack Benny just stops. He doesn't say anything. The man says, "Your money or your life?" Jack Benny says, "Don't push me! I'm making up my mind!" Well sometimes we worry about our money and sometimes we worry about our life, don't we? I'm not sure that Jesus' story today was really a parable about money. I think it included money, but it was basically about our values, our lifestyle, and our attitude towards life and what we have, and who we are as the people of God.

I want you to notice that Jesus called this man, "a fool." Now often times in the parables people did foolish things, but Jesus didn't call them "a fool," but he calls this man "a fool." In Greek a "fool" meant "without inner perspective." It was somebody who was lacking morally and spiritually - somebody who couldn't see the big picture. Some people would define it as stupidity. I wonder why Jesus called this man "a fool?" I want you to notice several things in this story. Number one, this man saw his wealth as a storage problem. Jesus saw it as an attitude problem. Now most of us don't store a lot of stuff, do we? We don't keep a lot of stuff, pack our basement, our attic, our garage, and all that stuff, do we? Well, this rich man in our story had a storage problem. He had done well with his crops and God's not against us doing well and being successful. This man had worked hard and he had invested well, but he had so much grain that he couldn't store it all and he talks to himself and says, "Let me just tear these old barns down and I'll build some new ones. I'll build some bigger barns and then I'll have ample grain for myself for the rest of my life and I can drink, eat, and be merry." He was all about himself, and he had a storage problem. Now I don't know if any of you have ever watched "The Hoarders" TV show on TV - it's pretty bad. You can't even

hardly get through their house - you've got to make a path to get through. There are people that are hoarders. Sometimes I wonder if some of us don't store a little too much stuff. Maybe we have a storage problem, too.

Joshua Becker is a Pastor in West Virginia. He was studying this passage of scripture one time and he said he was trying to prepare a sermon on it. He said that God convicted him that he and his wife store way too much stuff, and they needed to give some stuff away to the less fortunate - those who were needy and could use some of their stuff. He said, "Our children are grown. They have their own homes, their own furniture. We've been living here for years and we've continued to accumulate. I am a Pastor, and I have a good salary, and my wife inherited some money when her parents died. We've done really well. I think, honey, that we need to give some stuff away." So, they prayed about it, they talked about it, and they decided to be in line with the character of God. God always cared about the poor and the needy. They decided to get rid of some stuff. So, they started going through their basement, their garage, and their attic, and they started giving some women's clothes to the abused women's shelter. They gave some of his clothes to the Salvation Army. They gave some of the furniture that they weren't using in the basement and in the attic to an organization that helps people who lost their home and everything in it during a fire. He said, "As we began giving stuff away, God began working on our attitude to bring us in line with God's thinking - that God gives us everything. He gives us the ability to work and earn a living and he has blessed us with so much, we need to be able to share with others." **Sometimes I wonder if some of us don't have a storage problem and God needs to work on our attitude.**

And then I wonder if Jesus called this man "a fool" because all he talked about was "I." Go back and count in that scripture passage that we read how many times the man referred to himself -- "I," "me," "my barns," "my crops," "my grain" - it's "I," "me," "myself," "my care," "my life," and "ample for my needs going ahead." **God is not saying, "Don't take care of yourself," but this man thought more about himself than he did God or others.** He forgot that God is the one that is the source of all we have.

He provided the rain and the sun for the man's crops. He gave him the health and the mind to be able to work and do what he did. This rich man talked about himself, rather than God and others.

There's a movie that came out years ago called "Shenandoah" and it starred Jimmy Stewart (or James Stewart). He plays the part of a farmer living during the Civil War. Now I want you to notice James Stewart's words as he prayed every day at lunch and dinner time; he said the same prayer for his children every night: "Lord, I planted the seeds. I plowed the ground. I gathered in the harvest. And Lord, if it wasn't for me, there wouldn't be any food on this table. But, thank you anyway." He forgot -- God gave the rain and the sun for the crops. God gave him the mind and the brain to be able to work and do what he did. God is the source. Yes, we do our part, but God does his part and we need to give God credit.

This rich man thought too much about himself rather than God and others. Jesus told that man in the story, "You fool, this night your life will be demanded of you. And then who will have - who will get what you have prepared for yourself? This is what will happen to those who store up things for themselves and are not rich towards God." God is not against us working hard, being successful, investing well, and having things, but he wants us to remember that he is the source of it and that he created us to be a blessing to one another and to help each other. We are to share our time, talent, and resources with others - not just hoard it for ourselves. We are to be rich towards God.

I heard a cute story - Barbara Klassen tells about her great-great uncle who lived to be 106-years old before he died. He always enjoyed life; he was full of energy; he was always loving to take his less able-bodied senior adults and drive them around town. Well, when he was 100-years old his license was up for renewal and he went into the license bureau and the clerk looked at him and said, "Hmm. You are 100-years old. What in the world do you need a driver's license for?" He thought about it for a moment and said, "Well, somebody's got to drive all those old folks around." You see, he still found a way to be of service and to help

people. Be rich towards God. Be rich in your relationship to God and others. Be rich in serving him. Be rich in your faith and trust of him.

There's another movie that came out a few years ago called "The Doctor" and it starred John Hurt. John Hurt was a business-like doctor. Now, some of you have doctors like that - they are all business; they have no personal connection or relationship with you; they come in, tell you how it is, and walk out the door. Well, John Hurt was that kind of doctor in this movie. One day a Hispanic farmer came in to see him who was very sick. He brought his wife and his little daughter with him. John Hurt looked at the Hispanic farmer and said, "Sir, you are going to die soon. You don't have long. You need to get your affairs in order." The farmer didn't say anything. He put his arm around his wife and he put his arm around his daughter. He says, "Sir, I've got my affairs in order." ***You see, it's important to take care of your family and invest in their lives and make a difference in their lives. But God also calls us to care about others.***

In the scriptures, Jesus said, "I was hungry and you fed me. I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was naked and you clothed me. I was in prison and you visited me." And then they will say to Jesus, "When did we see you hungry and feed you, Lord? When did we see you naked and clothe you? When did we see you thirsty and give you something to drink?" And Jesus said, *"Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these, you've done it unto me."* *We are called to care and minister to the needs of others, and those who are hurting, those who are poor, those who are less fortunate - not only our family and our friends.*

One day, Jesus says, we're all going to die and what's going to be important is not our financial portfolio, how much stuff we have, how much land we own, how much stock we've got - because we can't pull a U-Haul behind the hearse. We can't take it with us. What's going to count is how we lived while we were here on earth and how rich we have been towards God and others. Have we lived with faith in him? Have we loved others and God? Are we serving others and helping those who are poor and needy? What kind of difference are we making?

Some of us have a storage problem and some of us have We have an attitude problem. Some of us talk too much about “me” and “mine.” You know if there were a problem in this world today – we know what the third world problems are: poverty, homelessness, not having adequate healthcare, but sometimes our problem is being inconvenienced in life and sometimes it’s not having enough gratitude. But, I wonder if we don’t talk about ourselves too much and what we want and what we need. God wants us not to forget others and him.

Jesus said, “This is the way it will be for those who store things for themselves, but are not rich towards God.” May we be rich in our relationships with God and one another. May we be rich in faith and trusting him, doing our part and then allowing God to do his part. May we be rich in serving those who are less fortunate.

When I was in McGill Baptist Church in Concord, I taught a group of royal ambassadors -- it was a missions’ organization for the little boys in the church. They didn’t have enough fathers that one year to help teach, so I helped the two fathers teach the RA boys. They were boys grades one through five. One night we decided to do a service project; we were going out to the local homeless shelter. They had just built a new homeless shelter in Concord and it was located near the Salvation Army. So, we went to check out the new building. The director was showing us around – we saw the women’s sleeping quarters, the men’s quarters, the new laundry room so they could wash their clothes. They had beautiful bathrooms. We went in the dining room and there was this beautiful Christmas tree that somebody had donated and decorated. One little old boy in our group (that was 7-years-old) said to the Director, “There’s no presents under that tree,” and the Director said, “Sir, we don’t have anybody to give any presents and they can’t afford them.” The little boy looked over at me and says, “Ms. Peggy, we can help them, can’t we?” There’s 40 people in the homeless shelter. I said, “Yeah. We’ll do the best we can!” So, we went back to church that night and after the meeting with the kids was over, the two fathers and I talked about what we could do to help those little boys get some presents for the homeless people

and take them back before Christmas. So, we asked the Pastor if we could have a collection at the church where people donated socks, gloves, candy, fruit, and all kinds of stuff. We gathered those items for two weeks and then I had those little boys to gather in their classroom and we formed an assembly line and put all that stuff in a bag - a pair of socks, a pair of gloves, fruit - apples, oranges, candy, hygiene products, etc. We put it in a bag, twisted it up, put a ribbon around it and said, "Merry Christmas." The next day, all those little boys went with us on the van and we took the bags to hand-out at the homeless shelter. They made us stand outside and hand it to the homeless people as they came in, and I want you to know that most of them would just take their bag and walk in, but every once in a while, you would see a tear drop down the eyes of a homeless person. There was one man that I'll never forget from that night -- the Director said, "He went into the bathroom and cried." The Director thought he was going to come and eat at dinner, but he couldn't find him; so, he went to look for him. He was in the bathroom. The Director said, "Come on out and eat." He said, "I got to go talk to that little boy that gave me that bag." He got his composure and he went back out to look for the boy who gave him the Christmas bag. He found him and said, "Thank you. I haven't had a Christmas present in years. I don't remember the last time somebody gave me something. Thank you, son."

God called us to be rich in relationships and to care about others. May we be rich in taking care of our family, our neighbors, and those in need - rich in faith, rich in love, rich in service - and not just collecting stuff we can't take with us. Amen.