

Don't Be a Fool

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Grace and mercy from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Have you ever been so taken up with something that it blinds you? You can only see that one thing, and everything else fades into the background. Maybe it's been your work. You have a project or a task to get done, and so you put everything you have into it to make sure that it's the best and that it gets done in time. But then everything else you ignore. You might ignore your kids. They have a sporting event or a music recital, and you just don't have time for it because you're focused on work. Or maybe you're working so hard that a friend reaches out to you, and you respond, "I can't do this right now. I have my work." And so you end up ignoring everything else.

Or maybe it's been a new TV show. You get so hooked that everything else fades away. You ignore your chores. The dishes can wait another night. You think, "I don't think the floor really needs vacuuming today. I'll just watch one more episode." Or perhaps you ignore your neighbors. They ask you for help, but you say, "I can't right now. I'm watching this really great show." And as a result, we're blinded.

Today, Jesus tells a parable about a rich man who is also blinded. Let us hear this parable again:

And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man produced plentifully, and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do? For I have nowhere to store my crops.' And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.'" But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."

This rich man is blind. His possessions blind him. He sees everything he has been given, and that is all he sees. He speaks to himself, to his own soul, and says, "Soul, you have many goods." He does not look to God. He does not look to his neighbor. He gathers and collects all his treasures for himself.

This is another thing that blinds this man. If you listen, you will hear him say again and again: "I," "mine," "my." Jesus calls this covetousness. The man looks to himself and his needs, not merely first, but exclusively. He only looks to himself.

Because of this, he is blind to God. He does not see his possessions rightly. They are not truly his, but gifts from God. God gives abundantly, yet the man only sees them as his own. He also does not see his neighbor. He is blind.

And if we are really honest, how often are we blinded by our treasures? These are gifts that God gives us, but we only see them as ours. We bury ourselves in our possessions. We cover ourselves with them. The image that comes to mind is Scrooge McDuck jumping into his vault of coins. But what would he actually find if he were buried under them? Darkness. He would be alone.

When we focus our eyes on our treasures, we take our eyes off God, who is the true giver. We lose sight of the light. We turn inward and say, "This is mine." We ignore God. We ignore our neighbor.

We live in such a wealthy and abundant place. We are truly gifted. But how often do we turn toward getting the next best thing? The next fancy phone, the nice newer car. Do we truly see these things as God's gifts to us? How often instead do we think, "I've earned this. My hard work has given me this"?

This mindset of "me," "mine," and "I" becomes a circle that closes tighter and tighter. You look more and more inward until you can see nothing. And you are blind.

I am blind. I cut myself off from my God, from His light, from His presence.

I am this fool. And I must die. God says to me, "Fool, tonight you die."

We all must die, not just a physical death at the end of our lives, but a spiritual one. But you who have been baptized have already died. Your life is hidden with God in Christ. Our life is with Christ, who is the light of the world. We try to hide in our darkness, but God enters into this world as the light.

Christ comes into this world of darkness in order to die the death required of us. God says, "Tonight you die," but Jesus says, "I will die for you. I will take your place." You may turn away. You may hide. But I come for you, that your eyes may be opened, that you might see Me and My love for you.

You are not blind anymore. You can see.

But the world does not see as we do. And so the world treats Jesus as a fool. They mock and scorn Him. They beat and bloody Him as He goes to die a death for us. He enters into our judgment in our place. The very light of the world dies, and yet they cannot see. They curse Him as a fool, He who is the wisdom of God.

But Christ says, "I come so that those who cannot see may see." He died so that you are forgiven, so that you can see. He says to the blind man to whom He gives sight, "Your faith has made you well." And He says to you, "Your faith has made you well." You are not blind anymore. Your faith has saved you.

This is the greatest gift from God. Because on that judgment day, God will not see you as a fool, but as one covered in the blood of the Lamb, who gave His life for you, so that you may receive true sight.

And because we now live as ones who can see, what do we see?

First, we truly see God. We now have a right relationship with Him. We see His love for us on the cross. We see the empty tomb. In baptism, in the Sacrament, we see God's love.

Second, we see God's riches for us in those same places. We see His grace. We see His giving of faith, His love. His riches for us include the fruit of the Spirit. God does not promise us earthly treasures. As Paul says, we seek the things that are above.

Third, we can see and have a right relationship with the gifts God has given us. We enjoy them in their proper place and time. We share these gifts. As I said with the children, it is not good to enjoy them alone.

And finally, we can see our neighbor in their need. We can see them as one whom God loves and desires us to love.

Do not be a fool before God. See His love for you.

The rich fool could not see God. He could not see his neighbor. He was blinded by his possessions. But let this not be you. Instead, see God's love for you in Christ, the light of the world, giving us sight so that we are the ones loved by God.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.