

Someone in the crowd said to [Jesus], "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." But he said to him, "Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?" And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." 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." (Lk 12:13-21)

Fool? The rich man thought to himself, "What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops? ... I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, & there I will store all my grain and my goods" (vv 17-18).

Fool? The man was only caring for what he had harvested. He was only caring for his bounty.

Fool? He was preparing for the future. He was making sure that there would be enough room in his barns and storehouses so that he could retire after his long-fought years in farming and buying and selling in the marketplace.

Fool? He was only doing what every single person in the modern world does, or at least ought to do—your pastor included.

Fool? The rich man thought to himself, "I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry'" (v 19).

But God said to that rich man, "Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?" (v 20).

Was the rich man *really* a fool? We know the answer's *supposed* to be "yes," but are we really sure? Isn't there a part of us that wants to argue with Christ in His parable. We could take up His hypothetical rich man character and say, "'Fool' seems like a pretty harsh judgment. Don't you think, Lord?"

"After all, the man was simply planning ahead, Lord. He didn't know he was going to die. Maybe he was just being a good steward of the gifts that were given to him. After all, only a fool would leave his grain out to rot or be eaten by birds and beasts." Was he really a fool?

Yes! What made this man foolish wasn't simply what he was doing with the

wealth the Lord had provided him. His foolishness didn't make itself manifest in his **planning**. His foolishness was in his **heart**. What was his **treasure**? Where did he place his **hope** and **trust** for the future? How does this man comfort his restless, weary soul? He says, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry."

You see, when this man was building his bigger barns and more massive storehouses, he was building a temple for his god. He didn't trust in the one true God: the Lord, who is the giver of every good and perfect gift. He trusted in the work of his hands. He trusted in the wealth that he thought he had built all on his own. He trusted in his god, Wealth or mammon, whom he worshiped at the temple of his barn. This god would provide for his future. This god would provide so well for him for such a long time that he could at last eat, drink, and be merry.

This hypothetical man from Jesus' parable was a fool not because he amassed such wealth but because he thought he had done it **himself** and because he **trusted** in it. This same kind of foolishness exists even in our hearts. This foolishness measures, plots, and plans as if Christ won't return at any moment or as if our death were some distant event so far in the future that it ought to have little to no effect on our present actions. Such foolishness only trusts in our own efforts to provide for ourselves. Such foolishness says I have to avoid the regular congregation of God's saints so I can gain enough wealth to provide for myself, my family, and my community. Such foolishness says that you have to be stingy with your money. This foolishness says that generosity is a modern vice that steals away your leisure—because you, too, would like to eat, drink, and be merry.

Now what does the Holy Spirit have to say about generosity? Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 9:7–8, "Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work." When considering how much of your money to give to the work of the church, be **generous**. But don't do it reluctantly. Don't be forced into it. The Lord loves a cheerful giver. Only consider how God is the one who gives you all that you need. He has promised to give you your daily bread. As the old hymn says it, "Count your blessings, count them one by one. Count your many blessings, see what God has done." (Johnson Oatman Jr.)

And after all, this is what we truly celebrate at Thanksgiving: God **provides** for us. We give thanks to God for giving us **all** that we have. He supplies seed to

the sower and bread for food. He will multiply your seed for sowing.

The Lord provides ***everything*** that you need. You have all that you need already in Christ. What does wealth promise to deliver to you or protect you from? Failing health? Christ defeated that by dying and rising again. A full stomach? Christ tells you to look at the birds of the air. He provides for them. They're worthless compared to you. Clothing on your back? Christ tells you to look at the flowers of the field. He dresses them in clothing finer than anything King Solomon could order for himself. You're so much more valuable than they. You've been bought by the precious blood of the only-begotten Son of God! Your sins are forgiven! Life eternal is yours!

But what about certainty, peace, and security here and now in this world? If we know anything at all about living in this world, it's this: Life is **uncertain**. Mass layoffs and government shut-downs can cripple an economy overnight, and your great amassed wealth is lost to the market or inflation. Health is uncertain. Heart attacks and surprise cancer diagnoses can seemingly come out of nowhere. Security is uncertain. Mistaken actions cause riots. In a matter of hours, peace and tranquility can be transformed into smoking cityscapes, rioting, looting, and anarchy. What can the false god of mammon do in the face of these? Nothing. Only fools trust in such a weak idol.

Instead, look to Christ, who has already defeated all these enemies: He divided loaves and fish on multiple occasions to feed thousands of men, women, and children in the middle of the wilderness. He faced rioting crowds who wanted to throw Him off a cliff, and He passed right through them. In the end, He willingly gave Himself over to death—even at the hands of an angry mob. Yet even death could not keep Him. This is the same Christ who tells you not to worry or fret. Only ask, and you shall receive. Seek, and you shall find. Knock, and the door shall be opened to you. All your hope rests in Him, for His righteousness endures forever and He distributes freely. Yes, Christ makes everything needful for body and soul abound to you. Thanks be to God for His inexpressible gifts! Amen.