

Outline: preaching on Luke 12:13-21, “A Miser Is None the Wiser”

Intro:

A man approaches Jesus and asks him to arbitrate a dispute he’s having with his brother: “Tell my brother to divide **the family inheritance** with me.” This is all the context we get, but the request sounds reasonable, doesn’t it? After all, the guy isn’t asking to inherit *more* than his brother; he just wants Jesus to advocate for basic fairness. But here’s how Jesus responds: “Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of **greed**; for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.” Wait — since when is desiring fairness the same thing as being greedy?

If that’s not confusing enough, Jesus keeps going, telling his listeners a parable about a rich landowner who carefully stores his wealth ahead of his retirement — only to learn that his life is about to end: “You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And **the things you have prepared, whose will they be?**” Okay, this is where I get confused. What’s wrong with planning ahead? With saving for a rainy day? With making prudent choices when it comes to wealth management?

But hang on, there’s still more: Jesus concludes his parable with one more warning: “So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God.” What does *that* mean? What does it mean to be “rich toward God?”

I empathize with the man in the crowd questioning Jesus. I know all about dealing with family inheritance- who gets what, how much, why one may be more deserving than the other, and most of all where it goes.

God let me tell you **the stuff, the possessions** all of it can fill 3 30 yard dumpsters and still youd have to spend money to buy storage space which is what I’ve been building for half this past week

1. Family Inheritance

- a. I’ve inherited so many tools from my father that I had to build a 10 x 8 shed to store it all
- b. “The things I’ve prepared, whose will they be? They’ll be to your children. They’ll go to your next of kin.
- c. Ecclesiastes 1:
  - i. Solomon’s search for the meaning to life/life’s question... “**why toil?**”
- d. Car ride w/ friend questioning the **vicious cycle**
  - i. His answer: capitalism
  - ii. We work b/c we have the freedom to pursue personal gain that motivates us to be set apart from others
  - iii. So then the answer to why work is just to make more than everyone else?
- e. Is that not greed? Is that not idolatry of money? Is that not storing up earthly treasures rather than being rich toward God and storing up heavenly treasures?

2. Greed- I cant question Steven’s answer though...

- i. Like the miser in the parable, I tend to think that I’m entitled to do what I want with my own hard-earned money. But from the text,

*Jesus doesn't agree.* Like both men, I tend to compartmentalize my life into convenient “earthly” and “heavenly” areas, such that loving my brother (or sister, or neighbor) as myself has little to do with what I do with how I spend my time and money, and thinking about my death doesn't require me to compromise my 401K. Again, Jesus sees things differently. Where I see in part, Jesus sees the whole. Where I see what's pressing along the surfaces of my life, Jesus sees the depths of my heart. Where I obsess over the temporal, fleeting things, Jesus fights hard for the eternal. For the inheritance of the Kingdom.

### 3. Miser v. rich toward God

- a. So How do we be rich toward God? How do we inherit the Kingdom?
- b. Jesus concludes his lesson with an exhortation to be “rich toward God.” It's a beautiful and inspiring phrase, but what does it mean? What does a heart (and a lifestyle, and a home, and a bank account) “rich toward God” look like? Maybe — if we can infer from the lectionary reading — it means guarding against greed instead of obsessing over fairness. Maybe it means holding our mortality closer than we want to. Maybe it means asking hard questions about what makes us feel secure or insecure. Maybe it means acknowledging that even our hard-earned, well-earned, self-earned wealth comes from God and belongs to God. Maybe it means prioritizing human interconnectedness over personal gain or asset management. Maybe it

means dialoguing with God more ardently than we monologue with ourselves. Maybe it means holding human wisdom lightly, knowing that God’s wisdom will almost always render our own foolish.

- c. In the parable Jesus tells, God confronts the rich landowner with the most chilling words: “This very night your life is being demanded of you.” Are we listening? What would change about our financial lives if we really believed this? What would we do differently if we believed that God does in fact demand our lives from us every single day, in every single way? Because he does, doesn't he? The call to take up my cross is a daily, hourly, minute by minute call. Is it also a dollar by dollar call? If our lives *have* in fact been demanded of us, then how should we live? What should we leave behind? What should we carry forward? What should we give away?
- d. *Be rich toward God.* Don't shy away. Be brave and wrestle with what this invitation means, because the richness we spend on God is the only richness we'll keep in the end.

- 4. Conclude with Luke 12:22-34