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**Luke 12:13-21**

12:13 Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me."

12:14 But he said to him, "Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?"

12:15 And he said to them, "Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions."

12:16 Then he told them a parable: "The land of a rich man produced abundantly.

12:17 And he thought to himself, 'What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?'

12:18 Then he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.

12:19 And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.'

12:20 But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?'

12:21 So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God.

**Communion Meditation**

"I pity the fool" was a statement made by Mr. T on the 1980s TV hit show, "The A-Team." Mr. T inspired many a kid to get a Mohawk haircut, but his memorable line, "I pity the fool" was his trademark.

Today we hear Jesus telling us a parable about the rich fool or "barn guy" as some call him. And frankly, pity is what I feel for barn guy.

There is a painting entitled "Rich Fool" by James Janknegt from Austin, TX.

Picture a man in a large house eating totally alone.

His house is empty.

Next door is a neighbor's house.

It is a much smaller house with a family in it- full house,  
eight people eating together at a table.

At the rich fool's house, there is a child with a hole where his heart should be knocking on the door.

The man is unable to recognize need knocking on the door.

He is unable to respond.

His life is contrasted by the fullness depicted in the small modest home where there is community and people sharing a meal.

The man is isolated; perhaps his soul is empty like his house.

I pity the fool.

Even more he is talking to himself...which is not bad since we all have done it, but notice, he has a dilemma of abundance and blessing.

And whom does he consult? No one but himself. He has no person or God to consult.

He is self-sufficient and needs no one.

Or so he thinks.

He exists in his own universe.

He does not consult an advisor, nor consider what his windfall might do for anyone else but himself.

He has no awareness of the child with the hole of need standing on his stoop.

I pity the fool.

In the Wisdom literature of the Old Testament a fool was anyone who fails to notice how the world works, thus adapting himself accordingly.

Fools are the ones who spit into the wind,

who saw off the branch they're sitting on,

who are constantly trying to row their boat against the current because they simply do not pay attention to how life works.

Fools are also un-teachable.

It's not only that they fail to make good observations on what works and what doesn't, fools also refuse to listen when *others* point these things out for them.

Fools, the old adage has it, are often in error but never in doubt.

In fact, the more foolish a person is, the more likely it is that he or she will become more and more isolated as time goes by.

People give up on fools.

"There is no sense in talking to him," folks eventually conclude.

We have all heard the phrase "a fool's paradise."

And that phrase is a reflection of how it often goes: having cut himself off from those who could teach him valuable lessons, having clouded his own vision to keep from seeing the consequences of his own actions, the fool becomes an island unto himself.

But biblically speaking there is one last piece of folly that often attends such folks and it is reflected in that verse from Psalm 14:1, "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.'"

The last straw, the ultimate piece of damnable folly is to live cut off from God.<sup>i</sup>

So while we could take away an easy moral from this Scripture, like "you can't take it with you" or "You never see a hearse with a U-Haul behind it"

Jesus will not let us get off that easy.

Truth is, all you come into the world with is a body and time.  
Both have an expiration date, so live in the present.  
Jesus came that they might have life and have it abundantly- but stuff is not life.

Jesus is not railing against wealth or wise investing.  
The man has no regard for anyone else, including what God would want.  
The fool is cut off from God who gave him life, blessing, and will face him in death.  
The man's sin is greed.  
He has made himself and his own comfort an idol.  
The artist Jankeg writes about his painting, "The rich fool dines and dies alone."  
And meanwhile the eight family and friends in the smaller home enjoy one another and share in the blessings they have received from God's hand.  
I pity the fool.

The man has no idea who or whose he is.  
He belongs to no one and is responsible for no one.  
Especially those he does not see or care to see- the child in need at his door.

Jesus warns the man asking the question of inheritance and those of us hearing him now, "Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions." (Luke 12:15)  
Later in Luke 16:13 Jesus says, "You cannot serve God and money."  
Both claim your life- your time, your mind, your heart, your strength, your love.  
You must choose.

Greed makes an idol out of money and possession, therefore,  
we become cut off from God.  
And secondly, greed cuts us off from our neighbors.  
Remember all of Jesus' teachings are couched in the commandment to love the Lord you God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength and to love your neighbor as yourself.

Medieval theologian Thomas Aquinas said that greed "is a sin directly against one's neighbor, since one...cannot over---abound in external riches, without another...lacking them."

Greed is the biggest hindrance to communion- with God, with others then.

This week my 12 year old friend George took part in a Confirmation camp at his church.  
His mom shared his faith statement with me.

I am always amazed when I read our Confirmation kid's statements.  
But this part of George's nailed it when it comes to loving neighbors and sharing blessings.

*I want to be a part of the church because we act on our faith. One time we made bags that had beans, rice, and nutrients for individuals without food. Although it was repetitive and I felt trapped doing mindless work, I realized that this kind of work is important. That is our responsibility as people who are loved by God and loved by others. We must take that privilege and use it for good even when we miss the mark or sin. As long as we control ourselves and try to do good, we can be forgiven by others and forgive ourselves.*

George knows something the lonely rich fool does not.  
All gifts from God are just that  
"gifts"-  
to be shared, to be enjoyed with others, especially those in need standing at our door.

I loved watching our mission workers serving in Guatemala last week.  
They served alongside the Ophthalmologist literally helping give sight to the blind.  
And they built a home for a man in the village who is sometimes ostracized and left out of the community.  
They restored his dignity by providing him a very simple home- a shelter from storms and heat.  
And to celebrate they sat in his front yard eating a meal together, giving thanks, sharing in fellowship, and giving all praise to God from whom all blessings flow.  
That looks a lot like the Kingdom of God.

Jesus shows us a different way than greed.  
Today at this table, we acknowledge that all of life is a gift of God's grace.  
Jesus took simple bread and wine as a sign of his giving his own life for all God's children.

In Christ we are called to a new way of life described by the Apostle Paul.  
How can we be rich toward God?  
Paul writes,

**Colossians 3:1-11**

3:1 So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.  
3:2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth,  
3:3 for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.  
3:4 When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.  
3:5 Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry).

3:6 On account of these the wrath of God is coming on those who are disobedient.

3:7 These are the ways you also once followed, when you were living that life.

3:8 But now you must get rid of all such things--anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your mouth.

3:9 Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices

3:10 and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator.

3:11 In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!

And today we must no longer be fools. We must wake-up and care for the need knocking at our door. We are called to look beyond ourselves.

Today the mass shooting in Dayton, OH is the 250th shooting in our country since January 1, 2019. That should astound and appall us. AS God's children, yes, we should pray, and then use any gift sat our disposal to act- in love of God and our neighbors.

We are called to live without anger, malice, slander, and act as Christ. There is no longer law enforcement or gun owners, activists and prayers, moms demanding gun sense- all are called to seek first the kingdom of God. So do whatever you can with whatever gift you have- support mental healthcare, make good laws, serve and protect, teach children a better way. Last night I had dinner with my friend from Montreat College summer staff. He is an economist with the Federal Reserve, but he is also an elder and a Christian. He decided to bring together youth of various faiths to serve together and build friendships. Do what you can with the gifts God gave you.

Paul also wrote he would rather be a fool for Christ than a dead man- empty and cut off from God and neighbors. (1 Corinthians 1:18, 4:10) alone.

Fools for Christ have the fullness of life- abundance made more joyful by the sharing of God's gifts. That is the life of true wisdom.

I do not know about you, but I pity the fool.

I would rather be rich toward God.

And you?

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<sup>i</sup> [https://cep.calvinseminary.edu/sermon-starters/proper-13c-2/?type=the\\_lectionary\\_gospel](https://cep.calvinseminary.edu/sermon-starters/proper-13c-2/?type=the_lectionary_gospel)