

“Beware of Wealth toward Self” Luke 12:13-21

Context: Luke details the truth about Jesus Christ by reporting his historical investigation of Christ’s birth account, active life, redeeming death, and life-giving glorification. Today’s study considers the place of earthly wealth and kingdom values. Luke recounts Christ’s foundational teaching regarding persecution, kingdom values, and God’s meeting of human needs in order that ‘God lovers’ may overcome darkness while living and declaring the Gospel. The text proper describes Jesus’ teaching about greed in response to a demand that he arbitrate a dispute over an inheritance. In so doing, Luke seeks to achieve the purpose of his writing, which is to steady the wobbly faith of ‘God lovers’ as they invest their life in eternal ends (cf. Luke 1:3-4).

Life Principle: God regards all life’s means as sacred vessels before His altar (cf. Luke 12:21; 2 Chronicles 29:18-19; 1 Corinthians 10:26; Romans 12:1).

1. Beware of what you’re buying into (Luke 12:13-15)

The antithesis of real existence is taught through an incident where Jesus is asked to arbitrate in a matter whose emphasis is earthly goods. Jesus makes it clear that is not His purpose. He teaches that neither earthly goods nor their proper distribution is what existence is all about; instead, He warns all to consider reflectively and protect themselves from buying into the trap of always wanting more earthly stuff in order to be happy.

2. Beware of ‘bigger is better’ (Luke 12:16-20)

God blessed the man’s toil so that the land produced much. Sadly, the unthinking man does not recognize this. He thinks only within himself, to himself, and of himself. He is the soul of life’s blessing. He thinks that in his ‘having of all,’ happiness will follow and it will be bigger and better than before. He forgets that happiness is conditionally dependent upon life and that this condition lies outside his control. His attitude is cast as unthinking in the light of the inevitable, which is mortality.

3. Beware of wealth toward self (Luke 12:21)

Jesus teaches the crowd a time-tested divine truth by helping the man seeking arbitration. Wealth toward self is eternal poverty before God.

For Further Study:

- Luke 12:15 warns against always wanting to have more. Where does the lack come from? Our **doctrinal statement ‘On mankind’** under **what we believe** describes the human person as made in God’s image and the human condition (<http://gracepointfellowship.org/files/DocStmnt.pdf> - cf. footnotes 3, 5, and 8. See also Genesis 3:1ff and Ephesians 2:3). How would our reflection of God’s image and our fallen nature explain the temptation toward insatiable greed?
- Parables are “earthly stories with heavenly meanings” requiring special interpretation methods. As a **Bible study method**, look up “Interpretation of Parables” under <http://www.gracepointfellowship.org/resources/community-life/2008/3/18/bible-study-resources>. What makes the parable of the rich fool a similitude and not one of the other three ways of telling a story? What does Jesus describe as the central truth of the parable? What actions reveal the fool’s attitude toward his stewardship of the crop? In what does his soul find rest? What actions reveal your attitude toward your stewardship of the goods in your charge? In what does your soul find rest?
- In Luke 12:21, the teaching about wealth, self, and God reiterates a Biblical theme seen throughout Scripture. Study the following passages in their larger contexts and in one sentence write down a theme that you found (cf. Psalm 39:6; Job 27:17; Ecclesiastes 2:18; James 4:13; Genesis 2:15).

Transformation exercise:

Meditate on Luke 12:19-21. As you spend or are paid money, consider your self-talk about the wealth with which God has blessed you. What kind of steward are you with His blessings this day? Were these blessings about you or about Him? Psalm 24 - Selah!