

MAIN POINT

God's generosity to us should result in generous living.

INTRODUCTION

Would you consider yourself a saver, a spender, or a giver?

What do you think drives this preference for handling your finances this way?

Where did you learn how to steward success, specifically financial blessings?

Imagine that you received \$500 unexpectedly. What would you do with it? Would you immediately put it in your savings account? Spend it on something you need? on something you want? Or, would you think how you could give those resources to someone else? No response is inherently more spiritual than another, but our responses should lead us to examine our hearts. Our hearts are often revealed by the way we handle success, especially financial success. In this disturbing parable about a successful businessman, Jesus addressed the way financial blessings can control us. Here Jesus does not condemn wealth, but asks us to consider a better way of handling wealth.

UNDERSTANDING

> READ LUKE 12:13-15.

What did the man in the crowd want from Jesus? Why did he think Jesus was a good person to ask?

Why did Jesus refuse to be involved in this man's business with his brother? What estimation of the man's motives did Jesus make with the answer He gave?

What similarities do you see between Jesus' words in verse 15 and our consumer-driven culture in the world today?

Jesus was well-known at this point as a great and wise teacher. Many in the crowds were coming to Jesus with a variety of requests and needs. One such man approached Jesus and asked Him to settle a dispute over inheritance with the man's brother. Jesus was perfectly capable to handle a request like this, yet He chose not to because it was a distraction from Jesus' mission. Jesus' response to the man indicated he was

motivated by greed and personal gain. His warning serves as a warning to us all that before seeking more, we should do the hard work of examining our hearts. To illustrate this point, Jesus told a parable.

> **READ LUKE 12:16-19.**

Remember that Jesus delivered this parable to a crowd in an agrarian society. How would they have viewed the man that Jesus described?

Look at verses 17-19. How many first-person pronouns does the man use in these verses? What does that reveal about his perspective and priorities?

What assumption did the man in the parable make about his extra resources? In what areas of life are you tempted to make the same assumption? What is dangerous about this assumption?

What crucial mistake did the man make in verse 19?

After his conversation with the man, Jesus told a parable to illustrate the dangers of always seeking more. The man in the parable was blessed with an abundance of crops and had nowhere to put them. In the first century, the crop this man harvested would have been seen as an enormous blessing, likely as one that had come directly from God. Instead of considering how he could have leveraged his blessing for others, he decided to build a bigger barn, sit on his resources, and plan for a day in the future. The kink in his plan was there was no day in the future—the Lord required his life sooner than expected. Jesus' parable should not be seen as a condemnation of wealth, but rather a warning to those who are always seeking more before seeking the good of the kingdom.

> **READ LUKE 12:20-21.**

Are you surprised by the response God gave the man in the parable? If you met a man in a similar situation, would you applaud him? What made this man's actions sinful rather than responsible?

In what ways do our possessions blind our hearts and minds from clearly seeing the things of God?

How does this passage lead us to give a more watchful eye to what we do with our money? What are some steps we can take to help us see what the Holy Spirit would have us do with our financial blessings?

The problem, as with all other parables, is the heart. The man's thought process shows that he was primarily concerned with himself rather than with how God blessed him and how he could leverage those blessings to help others and build the kingdom. The root issue is one of consideration. When we are blessed, particularly financially, we should seek the Lord to see how we should use the resources He has provided. God's generosity to us should result in generous living.

APPLICATION

What are some steps you can take to obey Jesus' words in Luke 12:15 and watch for greed in your life?

What would it look like for us to be generous as a community of faith? How can we pull our resources together and put them to greater use?

Intentions are good but actions are better. Is there something you have been intending to do with your success and the blessings that come with it, but have never gotten around to doing? How can you take action this week?

PRAY

Pray that God would give you a generous heart. Ask for God to reveal hidden areas of greed in your life and help you discern how you can let go of that which does not bear eternal fruit. Thank God for every good thing He has provided for you and express your confidence in Him to take care of you.

MEMORIZE

He then told them, "Watch out and be on guard against all greed because one's life is not in the abundance of his possessions." –Luke 12:15

COMMENTARY

LUKE 12:13-21

12:13-14. An anonymous member of the crowd interrupted Jesus. He set Jesus up as a human judge deciding inheritance rights. Jesus denied that He had any right to act in such a position. That belongs to the nation's court system.

12:15. Not making a legal judgment, Jesus did make a moral one. Your request shows how greedy you are, He told the man. Lay aside your greed. Think about life. What is most important to you? Money or relationship with God? Surely, your life is more important than what you own.

12:16-19. Jesus illustrated His teaching with a parable. A farmer overcame all agricultural odds and achieved great success. But this brought a new problem. What do you do with your riches? How do you store it until you can sell it or use it? How can you keep it from rotting and ruining? The answer is obvious. Build bigger barns. This is a great short-term solution, but can you afford the capital investment in relationship to what you normally expect? "Sure I can," the farmer declared, "For this crop is so good it will support me for years to come. I don't have to worry about money and work anymore."

12:20-21. God has another perspective: you must die tonight. Then what happens to all your wealth? This is not an exceptional case. It applies to anyone who trusts in riches. Riches have one major weakness. They have no purchasing power after death. They cannot buy the currency needed to get to heaven. Do not try to be rich in regard to the bank or barn. Be rich in relationship to God. Through prayer, study, obedience, and practice of the Word, be sure you are part of the kingdom of God.