

Rich Toward God

- What's so bad re building bigger barns? What else supposed do, let crops rot in field? Where else going put it all? Besides, abundant harvest doesn't happen by accident. Seems like this guy: good farmer, hard worker, wise manager, honest man – doesn't seem be cheating workers. He's saving up crops for future – what Joseph did in Egypt. He's planning for retirement & looking forward to relaxing – eat drink merry – what's so wrong with that?! Put it in your context: is it wrong for you try grow your business, seek better paying job; build/buy bigger home, make sizable purchases; invest in your retirement, enjoy retirement?
- Today J tells parable of rich fool. Very clear, fool: **vs. 20ab**. But it wasn't big barns or plans for retirement that made him fool. What made this rich fool a fool was not that he was rich, but that he (as we'll focus on today) was not rich toward God (RTG).
- Jump to last words of Gospel, where J explains parable: **vs. 21**. What mean be RTG? Being RTG means having rich, deep, vibrant relationship with God by faith; it basically means having strong faith in Xp as Savior & prioritizing J above all else in your life. When you love Lord God all heart soul strength; when love/trust in J above all things; when you love his word & worship, live acc to his will – that's being RTG. I've said this in diff ways in diff sermons: tot com Sav wants to com fols; MT thing keep MT MT; don't trs trs, trs the trs. But it's all same – keep J #1, with focus today being: keep him above earthy wealth. Don't focus on being rich; pour energy into being RTG.
- But every one us has massive obstacle standing in the way of our being RTG – called greed. The underlying sin J condemns in this parable, sin that made rich fool a fool, sin that today J warns can destroy our faith: sin of greed. Whole parable started off bec **vs. 13**. And even though Jewish rabbis sometimes did arbitrate civil cases, J bristles at this request, **vs. 14**, bec knew, whatever the circmsts in this case were, this man's heart filled with greed. So, to gathered crowd, J: **vs. 15**.
- Greed not simply wanting things. You can want things; can pray God, ask for things you want. You can want successful business, easy retirement – not wrong. Greed is when your “want” for something becomes intense, overpowering; consumes you, and you covet what you don't really need; just want have it; and it aggravates you that don't have it; you may even consider doing something sinful to get it – that's greed. Greed is selfishness; makes you absolutely self-centered. Greed doesn't think re other people; doesn't care what others need/want; finds satisfaction only getting what it wants. And cold, hard fact matter is: every one us is greedy. In our hearts, we are greedy, self-centered people – that's truth. We may mask it; give appearance of contentment; may even fight vs our greedy tempts. But when crosshairs of our desires zero in on something we really want, deep down in our hearts greed rears ugly head. And from little on! Just talk to a PK/K teacher or parent of toddler: little kids grab toys from each other; “That's mine,” they cry. Have be taught share, not in their nature. Then we get older, but no less greedy. Set sights on bigger toys; more sophisticated at getting them then grabbing, crying. But even as adults, still have that same childish, self-centered greed.
- And so today, J: **vs. 15**. At its core, greed is idolatry. If an abund of poss is more imp you than your rel with J, that's idolatry. You've got 1st Com – no other gods; and 9/10th Coms – not covet. So 10 Coms are bookended with warnings vs greed & idolatry. And remem: it's not that having wealth & poss is sinful – these are blessings that God himself gives. The issue here is not what you own, but what love, what your heart considers god. And if you let your love for Lord fall secondary to your love for abund of poss (way rich fool w/ big barns did), then your greed will choke your faith to death.
- Few yrs ago in backyard, had this nice, leafy green bush; but started look unhealthy. Noticed had some vines growing on it; didn't think much of it – until later in summer, looked again: bush had turned brown, dry – dying. The vines had grown all thru, all around this bush, choking it to death. So I pulled vines out ground by roots, untangled from bush, pulled out whole mess of viney weeds; and bush was saved.
- That's what greed does to our faith. Grows slowly, gets tangled up in our lives, eventually chokes faith to death. That's why J tells this parable, to warn vs greed, so that doesn't choke out our faith – bec if you lose your faith, then lose salvation. In hell, no one cares what you owned on earth. Same true in heaven: no one will care what owned on earth, not even you. What matters here on earth: getting to heaven; and J is one who gets you to heaven. So our focus/passion should not be on getting rich, but on being RTG.

- And finally, in Christ, we are rich; we're fabulously wealthy. Bec of J we have the riches of heaven. Paul: **"You know the grace of our LJC, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich" (2 Cor 8:9).** J selflessly gave up riches of heaven, to be tortured to death on cross, by selfish/greedy people like us, to pay for all our sins: of greed & coveting, idolatry & money-loving. He shed his blood on cross for us, to forgive us for all these sins. He became poor so that **8:9b.** We have God's grace, forgiveness, promise of eternal life – this what makes us rich. And to top it all off, we even have a Father who's so gracious that, despite our greed, he still lavishly blesses us with physical wealth, as well! We pray for daily bread; he gives us a daily feast! We have way more than we need. Even if you're going through bankruptcy, you still have wealth/poss far beyond what you require. So really, there are 2 kinds of wealth: physical & spiritual. God graciously gives us both. But warns: if you love phys wealth more than sprt wealth, in end you'll lose both. That's what hap here: **vs. 20-21.** We have riches of heaven, bec of J! So don't focus on being rich; already are. Focus being RTG.
- Now, you could walk away from this sermon: yeah, he's right; greed bad; J good – but then go right back to coveting. We have to put this into practice in our lives every day; that's hard. So maybe need sort of a litmus test to guide us, help us gauge whether we're being RTG or not. So here are 4 ways (certainly many more, but for now) to guard vs greed, help us be RTG.
 - 1) Thank God! Thank God for everything! Everything good you have comes from him. Thanklessness sign of greed. So thank God every day for everything he's so graciously given you.
 - 2) Return wealth to God. Give some of it back to him. Use what he's given you to further his kingdom. Church offs are not a suggestion; they're a command from God. And if we refuse to give a regular, generous % of our income (with 10% still being the timeless standard), that's a sign of greed. This Nov, we're having big stewardship emph, and we'll explore this in more depth. But guard vs greed by returning offs to Lord.
 - 3) Use wealth to glorify God: with wise purchase decisions, careful stewardship of wealth he's given you, generosity toward others. Use your wealth to glorify God's name. Always ask yourself: will this decision bring glory to him?
 - 4) Be content. I can't say it better than **1 Tim 6:6-11a.** Be content.
- The rich fool did none these things. Didn't thank God, return offs, use wealth to glorify God, wasn't content. Said: bigger barns; eat drink merry! Think how diff parable would be if man said: "Lord, this abundant harvest gift from you; I thank you for it – and for all blessings you've so graciously given me. Lord, I'm eager to return generous portion of this harvest back to you for use in your kingdom. And I'm going use this wealth to glorify you, by being good steward & sharing with others. And I'm going be content. Next season, if not single crop grows in field and I lose everything, I'm still going love you, bec you're my God; I'm your child. And I know you'll take care of me." That's being RTG. And that's the attitude that I pray J, thru this parable, would work in all of us.

1 Timothy 6:6-11a

⁶ But godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. ⁸ But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. ⁹ Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. ¹¹ But you, man of God, flee from all this.

Luke 12:13-21

¹³ Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." ¹⁴ Jesus replied, "Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?" ¹⁵ Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions."

¹⁶ And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. ¹⁷ He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.' ¹⁸ Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. ¹⁹ And I'll say to myself, 'You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.'"

²⁰ "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?'

²¹ "This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God."