

**AGAPE HOUSE OF WORSHIP  
MIDWEEK BIBLE STUDY**

**Study Series: Speaking in Parables**

**Wednesday, February 22, 2023**

**Lesson 3: The Parable of the Rich Fool (Lk 12:13-21)**

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**INTRODUCTION: How to Understand the Parables**

The standard principles of exegesis (interpretation of scripture) should also be used for interpreting the parables. It is essential to ask what the parable meant to the original listeners of Jesus and the original readers of the Gospels, *and thereafter, the parable's application to us as today's believers*. These principles (below) are particularly appropriate to the parables, which contain a complete story with characters and a plot.

1. Examine the context of each parable: what prompted the parable? Was it a question, a problem to solve, or an issue to resolve?
2. Note that parables usually have one central or primary message and subsidiary messages.
3. Parables are not secret codes; they focus on telling people about the nature of the kingdom of God.
4. Take into consideration the cultural gap: we may not easily recognize some of the images and metaphors which were rich in meanings to people in the time of Jesus.
5. Jesus already interpreted some of the parables; in such situations, there is no need for additional interpretation.

**The Parable of the Rich Fool Summarized:** A rich man was blessed with abundant crops. (Lk 12:16) As he surveyed his environment, he was proud of his achievements, and made plans to build greater barns to store his crops. (Lk 12:17-18) In a discussion with himself and his soul, he planned to retire to enjoy the fruits of his labor for many years. (Lk 12:19) But God described him as a fool (Lk 12:20) because that very night his soul would be required of him.

- *Question 1: What prompted the parable?*
- *Question 2: What's the parable's central and subsidiary messages?*

*Five Key Lessons from the parable of the rich fool*

1. **Covetousness is a Dangerous Thing**
  - *Question 3: What is covetousness?*

The man's opinion of himself was at odds with God's opinion of him. The man: I've got it made, God: you are a fool. The man was in a dream state, not a fulfilled state. He was planning for bigger barns, but he never reached his goal. Jesus said to the man who prompted the parable: *Our life does not consist in the abundance of things that we possess*. Jesus cautions that in amassing more possessions, we should be careful of covetousness. When we live with the attitude that our life is about our possessions, we live in covetousness.

- *Question 4: So, what then does (or should) a person's life consist of?*
- *Question 5: How do you define success?*

2. **Self-centeredness is Antithetical to the Christian Faith**

Many people see financial wealth as the utmost pursuit. This man's trouble and anxiety were reflected in the words, "*What shall I do?*" Wealth could cause anxiety; it could be engrossing and steal the heart away from greater things. The rich man thought he had things all sorted out. He said: *my crops, my barns, my goods, my soul*. Everything was about him; nothing was about God. It proved in the end that

nothing was his, even his own soul was subject to God. His problem was not his earthly treasure but not being *rich towards God*.

- *Question 6: How can we be rich towards God?*
- *Question 7: Looking closely at the parable, why do you think Jesus called the man a fool?*

### 3. **Have an Awareness of, and Preparation for Eternity**

In one night, all the man's accomplishments and plans turned to nothing. He appeared like a great success, but God said he was a **fool**. Eternity proved the man a fool, and his story showed that it is stupid to give material things too high a place in life. The man was a fool – not because he was rich, but because he lived without any awareness of, and preparation for *eternity*.

### 4. **Everything, including our Soul, belongs to God**

This man, like the rest of us, owed his life, his livelihood, and his wealth to God; but most of all he owed his soul to God, and it would be required of him. When the man saw an extraordinary yield of crop, he asked, *what shall I do?*

- *Question 8: What other question should the man be asking himself?*

### 5. **Always Give Christ Priority**

The man didn't see his property as God's, he never surrendered those things to God. He failed to realize that they didn't belong to him. (See **Eph: 1:3, Eph 2:4-7**) Jesus admonishes that we should put to the right use our material riches. Soon after this parable (**Lk 12:33-34**) Jesus told his disciples to sell their belongings and give alms, and that helping the poor is often connected with "*laying up treasure in heaven,*" as Jesus counseled the rich young ruler. (**Mt 19:21**)

## CONCLUSION

The parable provides a glimpse into the life and death of a *rich man and* leaves us to judge whether he was a *happy* man.

1. Are you in a way aspiring to be like Mr. Rich Fool?
2. What do you treasure?
3. Where is your treasure? (See **1 Tim 6:6-10; 17-19**)