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## Choosing The Right Treasure

**LUKE 12:13-21**

### Introduction

1. This morning, I would like to share with you a true story which a certain college English professor shared some years ago with her freshman English class:

Many years ago, a certain woman and her five sisters grew up in a small Midwestern town during the Great Depression. In spite of the difficulties of the time, her father had managed to become successful as a banker. After high school, she left home to go to a university. Her sisters, however, stayed close to home, married and settled down. She too married and ended up teaching on the West Coast.

Several years later, her aging father died. She and her husband hurried home for the funeral. In the process of comforting her mother, she and her husband noticed that everything in the house had been tagged by the other sisters with their names. While she and her husband were appalled by what they saw, they said nothing.

Later, the table was set, and dinner was served. The tension among the family members was evident. The conversation was awkward. There were long moments of silence. Finally, her husband stood up and stepped behind their mother's chair. He said, "Everyone has tagged what they want. We're placing our tag on what we want." He then placed his hands on their mother's shoulders.

2. Perhaps, some of you may have witnessed similar situations in families you know.
3. No sooner is a loved one buried than family members begin arguing about who gets what.
4. It might even be that something like this has happened in your own family.
5. Greed is always ugly.
5. Covetousness can destroy any semblance of family unity.

6. It is such a situation that prompts our text this morning.
7. Let's look at how Jesus responded to this individual's complaint and the lesson He taught.
8. Most importantly, I hope that each of us will stop to examine our own hearts and ask ourselves what kind of treasure we are seeking.

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# I. An Issue Over Inheritance

## A. THE INTERRUPTION

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

1. Jesus was in the process of teaching about the need to confess Him before others when suddenly an anonymous individual interrupts Him with a personal request.
2. This person was obsessed with getting what he considered to be his rightful portion of the family inheritance.
3. Jesus did not like this interruption and quickly responded, "Man, who appointed Me a judge or arbitrator over you?" (v. 14).
4. Jesus did not come to settle domestic accounts, but to seek and save those who are lost.

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## B. JESUS' WARNING

"Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed" (Luke 12:15)

1. "Greed" or "covetousness" (KJV, NKJV, ESV) is "a strong desire to acquire more and more material possessions or to possess more things than other people have" (Louw-Nida).
2. In the Tenth Commandment (Exodus 20:17), God warned His people against coveting anything that belonged to their neighbor.
3. In Proverbs 21:26, Solomon contrasted the desire of the sluggard with the

generosity of the righteous: "All day long he is craving, while the righteous gives and does not hold back."

4. One of the sad characteristics of a person who is greedy or covetous is that they are never satisfied with what they have (*Ecclesiastes 5:10*).

"He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves abundance with its income. This too is vanity."

5. The apostle Paul condemned greed in his letters to the Christians in both Ephesus and Colosse:
  - a. "But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints" (*Ephesians 5:3*).
  - b. "Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry" (*Colossians 3:5*).
6. Jesus warned this man and us as well, "be on your guard against every form of greed" (i.e., the lust for our neighbor's money, position, house, car, husband or wife).

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### C. AN IMPORTANT PRINCIPLE

". . . for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions." (*Luke 12:15*)

1. Malcolm Forbes, the publisher of Forbes magazine once said, "The man who dies with the most toys wins."
2. At his death, it is estimated that his personal worth was somewhere between \$400 million and \$1 billion dollars — he had a lot of toys.
3. However, he was just like every other person who has made that appointment with death — he took nothing with him.
4. Having an abundance of material possessions does not cause a person to be more happy or fulfilled, not in the long run.
5. If we live long enough, we will each find that we have things we can no

longer use, take care of or enjoy because we are physically unable to do so.

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## II. The Rich Fool

### A. HIS FOOLISH REASONING (vv. 16-19)

1. Jesus told this man and all who would listen a parable about a “rich man” who was a farmer (v. 16).
  - a. This man did not come by his wealth dishonestly (i.e., stealing land from the poor, cheating his employees out of their wages).
  - b. God blessed this man and caused his land to be very productive — he found himself with an exceptional harvest.
  - c. No doubt, to everyone around him, he appeared to be very successful.
2. With such a bumper crop, he began to reason to himself:

“What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops? This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store my grain and my goods” (vv. 17-18).
3. The problem with this man’s reasoning was in what was missing.
  - a. He did not stop to think that all of this was not his, that he was a manager of what God had given to him.
  - b. In Psalm 24:1, David wrote, “The earth is the Lord’s, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it.”
  - c. There is no indication that he thought about sharing any of his harvest with others — no thought of the needs of the poor.
4. He is so self-absorbed that he thinks only of himself.
  - a. In verses 17-19 we find the pronoun “my” used four times and the pronoun “I” six times.
  - b. He sums up his life in this way, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry” (v. 19).

5. He chose to retire to a life of self-indulgence, something which does not find favor with God.

**Slide 6****B. GOD'S RESPONSE (VV. 20-21)**

“But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?’ (v. 20).

1. The world would view this man as a success.
2. He had worked hard, poured his money back into his farm and done well.
3. He was financially secure — now he could enjoy the good life.
4. God, however, considered this man a failure — He called him a “fool,” and said, “This very night very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?”
5. Everything which he had stored up for himself would now go to someone else.
6. Jesus added this final thought, “So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God” (v. 21).
7. What does it mean, to be “rich toward God?”
  - a. It means we invest our lives and the wealth which God allows us to have in that which has eternal reward.
  - b. The centurion of Luke 7, whose slave Jesus healed, was recognized for having built a synagogue for God's people.
  - c. Mary, Martha and Lazarus were continually opening their home to Jesus and His disciples for meals and lodging.
8. Invest yourself in the lives of those in this church and in our community.
9. While we can take none of the material possessions which we have acquired in this life with us to our eternal home, we can help fill the streets of heaven with the souls of the saved because of our efforts.

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10. The apostle Paul shared some instructions with Timothy, which he was to

pass on to the Christians at Ephesus (1 Timothy 6:17-19).

“Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.” (1 Timothy 6:17–19, NASB95)

## **Conclusion**

1. Of what does your life consist?
  - a. Treasures which perish with time and use?
  - b. Souls in which you have invested you time and energy, who will rejoice with you on the day of our Lord’s return.
2. In 1 Thessalonians 2:9, the apostle Paul asked and answered a question:

“For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation?”

“Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming?”
3. The Christians in that congregation would be a part of Paul’s treasure which he had laid up in heaven.
4. Though you may not be able to preach the gospel, you can be a person who ...
  - a. does good
  - b. is rich in good works
  - c. is generous and ready to share
5. Are you a person who is rich toward God?