

## **“In What Does Life Consist?”**

(Luke 12:13-21 – Pentecost 11 – August 24, 2025)

Luke 12:13-21 – <sup>13</sup>Then one from the crowd said to Him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” <sup>14</sup>But He said to him, “Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?” <sup>15</sup>And He said to them, “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.” <sup>16</sup>Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. <sup>17</sup>And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’ <sup>18</sup>So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. <sup>19</sup>And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.”’ <sup>20</sup>But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’ <sup>21</sup>So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

Dear Redeemed, who have been made eternally rich by Jesus Christ:

Have you seen that bumper sticker that says, “He who dies with the most toys wins”? It is a funny concept to picture adults acting like kids, comparing their toys with one another, envying each other’s collection. I remember as a kid wishing I had toys that others had: “If only I had that action figure, that baseball glove, that race car...” whatever. Now, those toys do not mean much. But as we get older, the toys and things we may covet simply change: “I’ve got to have that boat, that car, that company position, that dream home...” whatever. All through life, there is the temptation to feel our happiness depends on what we have and can accumulate for ourselves, the toys and titles we can acquire to our name before we die. Often, it means comparing what we have to what others have.

Perhaps this was the mindset of this man who said to Jesus: “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me” (vs. 13). After Jesus had been teaching spiritual truths, all this man could think about was material things. He was afraid his brother would die with the most toys. He felt he could not be happy unless he got his rightful due in life.

Jesus’ purpose was not to settle who gets what in this world, but to teach God’s Word, that sinners might know Him as their Savior and possess eternal life and heavenly riches. So Jesus used the man’s request as a teaching moment, to warn him and all who listened: “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses” (vs. 15). We are all tempted to greed, to try to find happiness for our souls in the passing toys and trinkets of this world. But let us ask ourselves: **“In What Does Life Consist?”** 1) **The fool thinks it consists in the abundance of possessions,** but 2) **The spiritually wise know it consists in being rich toward God.**

### 1) The fool thinks it consists in the abundance of possessions

Jesus tells a parable to show that a fool thinks life consists in the abundance of possessions. He begins: *“The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’ So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods’”* (vs. 16-18).

There is nothing wrong with having a good crop, or a successful year in business and income. The Bible never condemns wealth and possessions. But it does warn that greed and covetousness for the things of this world can cause a person to lose God’s Kingdom. 1 Timothy 6:9-10 warns: *“Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”*

Greed and the love of money – that was this man’s problem. He believed his life consisted in the abundance of his riches and possessions. Listen to how he speaks to himself: *“I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry’”* (vs. 19). He trusts his earthly possessions and pleasures to give his soul lasting happiness; and he trusts himself to provide these things. How often he refers to himself and his success, never once thanking God. He is worshiping the gifts he has been given, instead of the Giver Himself.

This is idolatry. Whatever one trusts to provide the needs of life and give life meaning – that is the god he serves. This man’s money, his possessions, his pleasures, even himself – these were his gods. He took pride in the kingdom he was building for himself in this world. Life was good, and it seemed it would be so for many years! *“But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’”* (vs. 20)

What a shock he faced when his life was demanded. He had thought his soul belonged to him alone; but now he felt his soul being taken from the world by God who gave it. He had thought his soul was rich, for it had felt that way with all that this world values; but now he saw how beggarly poor his soul was. He had thought he was wise by worldly standards; but now, he would spend an eternity in hell seeing how foolish it was to have tried to fill his soul with this world’s toys. Jesus concludes: *“So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God”* (vs. 21).

Why does Jesus give this warning? He knows how easy it is for us to idolize the things of this world, to put our trust in them instead of God. How often do we look at our life and think: “If I can just make this money, store it up and invest it, then I’ll know my life is taken care of. If I can just surround myself with this and that possession I desire, then

I'll be happy. Perhaps by retirement, I can build up my estate so I have it made for years." We can get so absorbed in a worldly kingdom we are building for ourselves and think less and less about God's Kingdom. Then we can feel less and less need for Jesus' words of eternal life and His salvation from sin and death. For eternity can seem so far away...

Do we see the trap? Satan does not care if we are rich or poor. He knows how to play on covetousness and greed in any class. He knows how to dangle the carrot on the stick, to lead a soul down that deceitful path lined with promises of this world's treasures, pleasures, and status. How many a soul has been fooled into believing: "He who dies with the most toys wins." But when his soul is brought before God, he finds he has lost all.

## **2) The spiritually wise know it consists in being rich toward God**

The spiritually wise know that life does not consist in the abundance of earthly possessions, but in being rich toward God. By God's grace, we have been made "*wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus*" (2 Timothy 3:15). In Scripture, God's Spirit shows us that our soul's true riches are in the forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life His Son has earned for us. "*For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich*" (2 Corinthians 8:9).

Jesus descended from the eternal riches of His heavenly Kingdom, all the way down to save us from our spiritual poverty. He saw us dressed in the filthy rags of our sin. He saw Satan, the world, and our sinful nature leading us by deceitful desires away from Him as the only Life Giver. Rather than see our souls demanded of us only to fall into eternal poverty and death, Jesus took our place. He suffered as the poorest of souls, taking on Himself the huge debt of our sin, which we never could have made up with God. He gave His life on the cross and was laid in the dust of death for all our self-serving greed and idolatry and foolish wandering from God.

Now in Christ, our crucified and risen Savior, God declares us forgiven. He has paid our whole debt of sin. Through Baptism and faith, God has lavished on us the riches of His grace in Christ. He has washed our sins away and raised us with Jesus to a new life. God has clothed us in the royal garment of His Son's righteousness. He has put His Spirit in us as a deposit, guaranteeing that we will share in His inheritance (2 Corinthians 5:5), the eternal riches He is preparing for us in His heavenly mansions.

Therefore our Epistle lesson encourages us: "*If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory*" (Colossians 3:1-4).

Our eternal riches in Christ put a new perspective on how we use the things of this world. We can work to provide food, clothing, and other comforts for ourselves and our loved ones. We can be wise in the way we save and invest money, using it in love to support our families, to support the work of the Gospel and other good causes. But no more do we need to fret and worry that we have not stored up enough for ourselves in this world. Along with His Son and eternal life, God is giving us all that we need in this life.

With Christ as our life, we are moved by His love to live for Him. His Spirit in us leads us to ask, “How can I show my thankfulness for His grace and goodness to me? How can I be a good steward of every gift God gives? The time He grants me on earth, the money and possessions He places in my use, the abilities He endows me with – I don’t want to use these as an end unto themselves; I don’t want to use them for my glory. I want to use His gifts for lasting good – to bring glory to my Savior, and to help others around me know His goodness and salvation.”

In a sense, our heavenly riches in Christ are not the kind we must leave behind when we leave this world. They are His gift to us forever. But in another sense, we want to leave His riches behind. We want to pass on to our loved ones and others us the riches of God’s forgiveness and salvation in Christ, and the unfading inheritance He has earned for us in heaven.

Now that our lives are hidden with Christ in God, we can pray confidently: *“I trust in You, O LORD; I say, ‘You are my God.’ My times are in Your hand”* (Psalm 31:14-15). You will provide all I need in this life, just as You have made my eternal life secure. If this should be my last day on earth, my soul is ready to go home to heaven, since eternal life is Your gift to me. *“For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain”* (Philippians 1:21).

So we sing in the hymn:

What is the world to me!  
 My Jesus is my Treasure,  
 My Life, my Health, my Wealth,  
 My Friend, my Love, my Pleasure,  
 My Joy, my Crown, my  
 All, My Bliss eternally.  
 Once more, then, I declare:  
 What is the world to me!

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. Amen.