

Dear friends in our Savior,

What if you woke up this morning and heard the message from God, "Today, you will die?" Do you have everything in order? Are you prepared for that moment? Have you invested your time, energy and resources into that which will bring the guaranteed results that you desire? What really matters most at that point in time? We don't often like to think this way. It is easier for us to ignore these thoughts and go about our busy and hectic lives convincing ourselves all the while that these aren't thoughts we will have to worry about for a long time. But who of us knows when that last day will come? The reality is that all of us are just a breath away from that announcement. Death isn't discriminatory. It doesn't respect age, position, importance, prosperity or anything else. A few years back a man that I used to build houses with in the summer time went to work on Monday morning and just fell over dead at 47 years old. There were no warning signs or anything. You probably can tell similar stories of people you know to whom this has happened. We just simply don't know when death is going to strike.

It is good for us to stop and reflect for a moment on what is really important and what really matters in life. We can invest our time, energy and money in so many pursuits that might bring temporary joys for us here but do nothing for our eternity. It is good to determine what is important, where we are going and focus on those things that lead us to that goal. Today, we have the chance to do that so that whenever that day may come for God to call us from this world, we are ready to stand before him prepared for eternal life. Today, let's refocus as God reminds us **Invest in Eternity.**

**Luke 12:13-21** *Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." <sup>14</sup> Jesus replied, "Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?" <sup>15</sup> Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." <sup>16</sup> And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. <sup>17</sup> He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.' <sup>18</sup> "Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. <sup>19</sup> And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry." <sup>20</sup> "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?' <sup>21</sup> "This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God."*

The pastor was invited to dinner in the home of a very wealthy man in Texas. After the meal, the host led him to a place where they could get a good view of the surrounding area. Pointing to the oil wells dotting the landscape, he boasted, "Twenty-five years ago I had nothing. Now, as far as you can see, it's all mine." Looking in the opposite direction at his sprawling fields of grain he said, "That's all mine." Turning east toward huge herds of cattle he bragged, "They're all mine." Then pointing to the west and a beautiful forest he exclaimed, "That too is all mine." He paused, expecting the pastor to compliment him on his great success. The pastor, however, placing one hand on the man's shoulder and pointing heavenward with the other simply said, "How much do you have in that direction?" The man stared blankly for a moment, then hung his head and confessed, "I never thought of that." He hadn't focused on where he was going.

This describes much of America today. Our society is focused on having and achieving more. We are encouraged to invest our time and energy attaining enough money to live the good life. We invest our money into pleasures that last only in the here and now. We invest our time and energy into making sure that we can secure our own futures. Celebrities allow TV cameras to follow them around as if their life is what everyone wants to emulate and strive for. It is easy to lose track of our final destination and be pulled off course by these visions of grandeur and the easy life.

So it was with the man in our text. Jesus was speaking to a crowd of a couple of thousand people about how to pray, warning them against hypocrisy and then encouraging them to confess him boldly. Suddenly, a man interrupted Jesus' discourse to ask a question that was completely off topic. Actually, it wasn't even a question it was more of a command: "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." He was so occupied with his finances that he wasn't listening to what Jesus was saying. This statement shows that this man didn't even understand the reason why Jesus had come to this earth. He actually thought Jesus had come to arbitrate petty arguments. This was an issue for a government official to decide. His mind was so preoccupied with greed—making sure he got his fair share—that he didn't even see it. He was investing his energy in making sure he had enough in the here and now he missed the eternity that Jesus was sharing with him. So Jesus issued a very stern warning against greed and told a parable to help the people then and us today understand exactly what really matters and what is most important for us.

Jesus doesn't hide his thoughts about the man in this parable. He calls the man a fool. Now, the question is: What made this man a fool? Was it that his crops did well? What is that he built barns to accommodate his large crops? Was it that he was making plans for his future? No, none of these are wrong. Sometimes this passage has been misinterpreted to say that having a lot of money and things and making plans for the future is wrong. Jesus doesn't say that. This man is a perfectly respectable person. He became wealthy through honest farming and through being a good manager. He was not wrong to have wealth. God is the one who blessed him with an abundant harvest. It was not wrong to build bigger barns to plan for the future. That is wise, prudent management. Famines and droughts were not uncommon in those days. We think of Joseph

in Egypt who saved up food in the good years to take care of people in the bad years. This does not say that we shouldn't save for emergencies and make plans for years ahead.

What made this man a fool is that he put his security for the future in his possessions so much so that he missed the eternal security Jesus came to bring. He was certain these possessions assured him of a life of ease and pleasure. His confidence for the future was not on the Lord but on his possessions. Listen to the number of "I" and "my" in our text. These show that he forgot where his blessings came from. He was investing for the temporary future here on this earth. He wasn't planning to use these blessings to help others in need. He didn't see the free time that his possessions gave him as a way for him to serve the Lord. He wasn't even planning to give a portion back to the Lord as a thank offering for blessing him with tremendous wealth.

No, instead, he gave credit to himself for this abundance, achieved all that he felt he needed for life and was now ready to kick back and enjoy it. The one thing he had not planned for happened: that night his life was taken from him. Death robbed this man of all his treasures. Now others would enjoy what he had gathered for himself. All the riches in the world could not stop death from coming and even worse did not earn him anything before God. He had not focused on what really mattered and it cost him more than his earthly life. His earthly riches which had become his focus, pursuit and security had robbed him of eternal life. What a fool indeed! His life ended and he was found wanting before God. He lived without God and sadly he died without God. What a tragedy this was.

Because of this Jesus offers a very stern warning which we do well to heed: *"This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God."* As God's people we must always be on guard against greed. Greed would be defined as a desire to have more that totally preoccupies you. It is the attitude of not being content, but always searching to have more and more things. Greed is found in anyone who seeks security and peace from financial wealth and material possessions. It is found in the person who has convinced himself that just a little more money, just a little more security, just a little more leisure and ease will make him happy, satisfied and content. It's the child who loves playing Minecraft until his friend has the latest editti on he just has to have. It is an adult who is happy with her three bedroom home until her little sister buys a 5 bedroom home and she just has to have one too. It is a man who is happy with his Ford Fusion until his neighbor comes how with the latest SUV and he just has to have it.

What a blow to our hearts to hear Jesus remind us of the truth: *a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.* It hurts us to hear a text like this because it cuts so close to home. It rips through our exterior layers and exposes the truth of our hearts. What matters most is our spiritual relationship with God and being rich toward God. Sadly, our focus too oft en has been on the things of this world. Sadly, we admit we have found ourselves caught in the race for more, more, more and neglected the purpose for which God put us on this earth. We have been stingy with what we have, storing it up for ourselves and being selfish in our offerings toward God and in our help of others. We get so caught up in the finances and worries about money that we miss ministry opportunities to step out in faith to expand ministry and trust in God to provide. We have seen our time here as the opportunity to get for ourselves as much as we can rather than growing in our relationship with our Savior and serving him in all that we do. We've let our pursuit of earthly things distract us from our pursuit of spiritual things. We have not always heeded this warning and deserve to face the fate of spending our eternity separated from our God.

Yet, if God were to tell us that today were the last day of our lives, we could face it with certainty and peace. This is beauty of God's riches. Through Jesus our Savior, God made us rich spiritually. We can take this sin before him and be assured that we are forgiven. How thankful that Jesus never once lost sight of his mission to be your Savior. Though tempted, he never succumbed to the temptations of greed nor focused on a comfortable life here on this earth. He said no to the life of comfort and ease here and went forward as your substitute, sacrificing his own life and comfort so that you can be rich before him. Jesus has taken away all your sins, including the sin of greed. Through the riches of God's love and grace Jesus washed away the dirt of our sin and made it possible for you to be eternally secure in his mansion of heaven.

This is what really matters! Our goal and focus now is to store up treasures for eternal life for ourselves and for others. This is what it means to be rich toward God. It means living a life of thanksgiving in gratitude for all that God has blessed us with. God has given us our time, energy and resources on earth for two reasons: to come to faith and to share your faith. If God has blessed you with many riches, then be rich in using them to serve your God by taking good care of your family, using them to support the ministry of God's church, and using them to help others who are in need. If God has blessed you with less, then be faithful and content with what God has given you and use it to serve your God to the best of your ability in these same ways. Work hard to provide clothing and all the necessities for your family, but don't worry or fret. Make your plans for the future but do so in humility and peace knowing that your time is in God's hands and he will provide the security that you need.

A life of contentment is found only in things we can take with us when this life is over. If we invest our time and energy and resources to gain more of this world, then we will never be satisfied or content. We will always want more and never get enough. Our inner life is not made any richer or fuller because we have more or less material wealth or possessions than others. True contentment is found in those things which do not perish and that are eternal. True life is found only in Jesus and his riches of forgiveness, life and salvation. Those are yours in Jesus your Savior. Those are what matter most whenever God comes to tell you that your life on this earth is over. Grow in the riches that you have in Jesus your Savior and let your priority be to serve God with the time, talents and resources that he has given you. Know the peace which God alone brings and **Invest in Eternity**. Amen.