

CHRISTIAN MONEY \$ENSE

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The Rich Fool

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Have you ever said something embarrassing in front of a group of people? During Jesus' ministry, a man embarrassed himself by speaking something at an inopportune time. Not surprisingly, Jesus used it as a teaching opportunity for the man, the crowd, and us.

Jesus was teaching a crowd some important lessons on hypocrisy. He said, "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy" (Luke 12:1, NIV). He followed this with some encouraging words about God's care for our lives. "The very hairs of your head are numbered. Don't be afraid" (Luke 12:7, NIV). He then spoke about how God would assist the disciples as they faced persecution. "The Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say" (Luke 12:12, NIV). Jesus wanted the crowd to know that God wants pure devotion to Him, and that He is our source of protection.

Not everyone got the point. "Someone in the crowd said to him, 'Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me'" (Luke 12:13, NIV). You can imagine that Jesus must have scratched his head at such comments. This man's comment was motivated by greed. "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Luke 12:15, NIV).

Jesus then launched into the parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:16-21). A rich man's ground produced a good crop. Material abundance forces us to make decisions. This rich man had two potential decisions to choose from: He could keep the abundance or he could share the abundance. "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. And I'll say to myself...take life easy; eat, drink, and be merry.' 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?'" (Luke 12:19).

The rich man in the parable thought that he had only one option with his abundance: keep it and please himself. Jesus tried to illustrate that there was another option that he did not consider: sharing of his abundance. In fact, all of us will ultimately share all of our abundance. "Naked I

came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart" (Job 1:21, NIV). Notice how Jesus equates sharing with others to giving to God: "This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:21, NIV).

Do you want to be rich toward God? Do you want the Savior to say to you, "Well done, good and faithful servant?" Then you must learn to be a good steward of what He has given you. Just as no one will ever compete in the Olympic games unless he disciplines himself and competes well, good stewards are trained, not born. If God has blessed you with abundance, don't fall into the trap of believing that you only have one option: pleasing yourself. Consider your other option: sharing with others and being rich toward God.

Begin by supporting your local church financially. The average church member gives less than three percent in the offering plate weekly. Decrease your expenses and increase your giving. Consider your appreciated assets that can be given to the Lord's work. Many people have appreciated stocks that produce little income. Gifting these to the Lord's work can benefit the giver with tax deductions, increased income for life, and avoidance of capital gains tax. More importantly, you can see your gift expand the Lord's work during your lifetime.

Stewardship is a matter of the mind and the heart. Develop a heart for sharing of the abundance that God has blessed you with. Then focus your mind on the best way to give. BBC FOUNDATION INC. has assisted thousands of individuals regarding stewardship. If you would like additional information on increasing your gifts to the Lord's work, contact us and ask for our "Introductory Pack." Good stewardship is not only about providing for the Lord's work. It is a way to worship God.

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