

## The Rich Fool: [Luke 12: 13-21](#)

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### Money Makes Fools of Us

#### Introduction

Having money makes life easier, being poor isn't miserable. But money does bring its problems.

Studies have shown that the more generous we are in such things as giving, volunteering and being emotionally available to our friends, the happier we are. But the more money we have the less generous we become, the more lonely we become and the less happy we become

{<https://hbr.org/2016/06/why-rich-people-arent-as-happy-as-they-could-be>}.

What's the answer? Let's see what wisdom Jesus has on this in our reading from Luke 12 v 13-21

Want to ask 3 why's of this passage

1. Why the request
2. Why the rebuke
3. Why the refusal

#### 1. Why the request?

The simple answer is that as you read through Luke, Jesus talks more about money than he talks about money more than any other single subject.

Most of Chapters 6, 11, 16. Indeed 11 out of Jesus' 39 parables are directly about money. 28 % of Jesus' teaching is related to money in some way.

If Jesus was vicar, that would translate into 15 sermons a year! One might expect that to turn the crowds away – but we read in Chapter 12v1 – many thousands.

But that was why he asked – Jesus was always talking about money.

But then, one wonders why did Jesus talk about it so much? The reason is that how you spend money, is a very good indicator of where your heart is. What you are passionate about, where your values are.

Christians are called to worship God, love our neighbour, change the world – to do those things requires a generous heart that gives time and money.

I can say, "I have faith" – how do I measure that though? One way to measure it is looking at how I use my money – It is quantifiable, it's concrete, it's a reality check.

My giving is a barometer of how much I am living out my faith.

#### 2. Why the rebuke?

Jesus rebukes him. "*Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you [or over you]?*" It is again a surprising response because Jesus does see himself as a judge, an arbiter. Just a few verses later v49-51, he talks about bringing division not peace.

Jesus' goal isn't to put them man off, rather he wants to bring him to his senses – to wake him up to the fact that chasing after money leads to a dead end – literally and metaphorically.

This young man has the ear of the Lord of Life, the son of God – and he's asking about how to carve up an inheritance – how small minded is that!

It reminds me of that great quote by C.S Lewis from the Weight of Glory *"We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition [ + accumulation of wealth] when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased."*

Have you noticed how many "I"s there are in the parable? The rich man in the parable was only concerned for one thing – himself.

Jesus has come to give him a life, a better life in the present age, and eternal life in the next. But he can only do that if he is "rich towards God", In other words, when he holds nothing back but gives everything to God - not when he is selfish and self-obsessed.

### 3. Why the refusal?

Jesus' lesson here is how money blinds us to reality. So much so, that he calls this man a fool. How often does God come and say to somebody, "You fool".

Notice he stored up 'everything'. The NRSV translates it particularly well – "there I will store all my grain and my goods"<sup>1</sup> He is a fool, because he has stored up as if this world is all there is, when actually there is a spiritual world too. God says to him "you are dying tonight" – what a fool you are.

Some years ago, a man in his 50's came to me very distraught. He had just been diagnosed with oesophageal cancer. He said to me "I gave my life to the city, so that I could retire early and live in comfort and now I just have months to live. What a fool I have been."

### What's the answer?

If you say to yourself "I have everything ", God will say "You are empty"

If you say to yourself "I need more", God will say "you need to give more"

### **BUT**

If you go to God and say "I'm empty" – he'll say "I'll fill you"

If you go to God and say "I will give you my life" – He will say "I will give you life and life in all its fullness."

As Christians all over the Guildford Diocese are thinking about their giving – perhaps this is a good moment to consider your giving. And if you were to ask me how much you should give, my advice is simply to pray. Put aside some time to be with God, seek him and ask God how much.

And remember, the more you give, the more you will receive out of life. There is real joy in giving.

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<sup>1</sup> [The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version](#). (1989). (Lk 12:18). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.