

Luke 12.13-21 NLT

13 Then someone called from the crowd, "Teacher, please tell my brother to divide our father's estate with me."

14 Jesus replied, "Friend, who made me a judge over you to decide such things as that?" 15 Then he said, "Beware! Guard against every kind of greed. Life is not measured by how much you own."

16 Then he told them a story: "A rich man had a fertile farm that produced fine crops. 17 He said to himself, 'What should I do? I don't have room for all my crops.' 18 Then he said, 'I know! I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones. Then I'll have room enough to store all my wheat and other goods. 19 And I'll sit back and say to myself, 'My friend, you have enough stored away for years to come. Now take it easy! Eat, drink, and be merry!'"

20 "But God said to him, 'You fool! You will die this very night. Then who will get everything you worked for?'

21 "Yes, a person is a fool to store up earthly wealth but not have a rich relationship with God."

The Word of God for the People of God.  
**Thanks be to God.**

### *Building Bigger Barns*

Grace UMC, Zanesville  
August 7, 2016  
8:15; 10:30am

Story of shopping

*What do we do with all this stuff!?*

*Where is going to go?*

*How much do we need?*

Moving from parsonage to parsonage (for much of our lives), we have had the challenge of answering that question with each new home.

*Where do we put everything?*

We have learned to use every available space we can find; basements, closets, garages, attics, closet organizers, storage units... you name it.

Our motto is:

*If it fits,... it stays!* And in some cases, never to be found or used again!

*How much do we need?*

Leo Tolstoy tells the story of a rich man who was never satisfied. He always wanted more and more. He heard of a wonderful chance to get more land. For a thousand rubles, he could have all that he could walk around in a day. but he had to make it back to the starting point by sundown or he would lose it all.

He arose early and set out. He walked on and on, thinking that he could get just a little more land if he kept going on. But he went so far that he realized he must walk very fast if he was to get back in time to claim the land. As the sun got lower in the sky, he picked up his pace. He began to run. As he came within sight of the starting point, he exerted his last energies, plunged over the finish line, fell to the ground, and collapsed. A stream of blood poured out of his mouth and he lay dead. His servant took a spade and dug a grave. He made it just long enough and just wide enough and buried him.

The title of Tolstoy's story: "*How Much Land Does a Man need?*" he concluded: "*Six feet from his head to his heels was all he needed.*" (Leo Tolstoy, *How much land does a man need?*, as told in Illustrations Unlimited, How much? No. 7, Materialism, p. 341)

*\*How much of anything do we really need?*

It is so easy to fall into the trap of accumulating more and more stuff. and then wanting more and more stuff. We never seem to be satisfied with what we have. This morning we conclude our sermon series on "Living as Disciples." we have been challenged to love all people, to listen intently, and to pray expectantly.

This morning we are challenged to find the proper perspective to God and possessions.

*How much do we really need?*

*Do you need a bigger Barn?*

In the Gospel according to Luke, we find a story about a rich farmer. The story was told in response to a person who asked Jesus to intervene in his family situation.

*"Tell my brother to share my inheritance with me!"*

Jesus responded: *"Don't be greedy! Owning a lot of things won't make your life safe."*

Luke 12. 15 CEV

*"Real life is not measured by how much we own."* v. 15b NLT

Then, Jesus told him this story.

Luke 12.16-21 MSG *"The farm of a certain rich man produced a terrific crop. He talked to himself: 'What can I do? My barn isn't big enough for this harvest.' Then he said, 'Here's what I'll do: I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones. Then I'll gather in all my grain and goods, and I'll say to myself, Self, you've done well! You've got*

*it made and can now retire. Take it easy and have the time of your life!"*

"Just then God showed up and said, '**Fool! Tonight you die. And your barnful of goods—who gets it?**'"

the story concludes with this punchline:

<sup>21</sup> "a person is a fool to store up earthly wealth but not have a rich relationship with God." NLT

"That's what happens when you fill your barn with Self and not with God."  
MSG

What are you filling your barn with?

**Bruce Larson puts it this way:** *"possessions do not give life its meaning. Possessions can become a tyranny in our life so that we are full of greed." "you are under the tyranny of things if you CAN'T have them, or if you MUST have them. The message here is to go through life as a steward of all that God chooses to give YOU."* (Bruce Larson, communicator's Commentary, 1983, Luke, ch. 28, Rules for Discipleship, pp. 204-207)

Is your barn overflowing with stuff? Is your life cluttered? Too busy?

*Sometimes we have difficulty distinguishing between Wants and Needs~*

George Murray, in an address entitled, "*Fanning Your Spiritual Fire*," ACOM National conference, Wheaton IL, July 19, 1991, has keenly observed how the line between wants and needs has become blurred. He writes: *"want has become need, luxury has been necessity, optional features have become standard equipment, and even if we don't like something, we can justify anything by waiting until it goes on sale."*

Dawn Chesser – UMC Discipleship Ministries

So what is the point of this teaching for those of us who seek to be disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, but whose lives are also characterized by abundance? Why is Jesus so negative about what might be called the American way and the American dream? Does he really expect us to give everything away and have nothing? I don't think so.

I think Jesus makes his primary point at the end of the parable about the rich man. After God replies to the man, "You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, where will they be?" Jesus concludes the parable by saying, "So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God."

It seems to me that Jesus is not saying an overabundance of possessions is bad in itself. He's saying that if we aren't careful, we can end up using our entire lives taking care of them and thereby waste time we might have spent pursuing a relationship with God, who is the source of our lives and the one who holds the key to abundant living.

- In What Ways does the abundance of possessions get in the way of our being in right relationship with God in Christ?
- In What Ways does caring for the church's "abundance of possessions" (building and furnishings, yard, parsonage, upkeep, salaried employees, etc.) get in the way of seeking transformation for the "least of these" in your wider community?

Dawn Chesser, Discipleship Ministries

Another story- Over the years I realize just how much I am like the Rich Fool. With multiple losses of power over time, we were forced to clean out our refrigerator and freezer on several occasions. I cannot tell you how I felt going through the freezer and dumping unused food in the garbage. It broke my heart to trash all this good stuff. Yes, in many ways, I have been like the rich man in the story.

While he amassed a small fortune in his farming business, I accumulated frozen food and paper products. And while he discovered that he would die before he could enjoy all his wealth, a part of me died whenever a massive power outage eventually led to the massive spoilage of most of the accumulated food in our refrigerators and freezers.

Lessons learned: *People who store up everything for themselves and neglect God in the process will have nothing.*

***God will provide for all of our needs. So trust the LORD to accumulate and hoard.***

What does this look like? How do we live this out?

It is almost as if I can hear Jesus speaking these words to me:

"Don't worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food to eat or enough clothes to wear. For life is more than food, and your body more than clothing.

"And don't be concerned about what to eat and what to drink. Don't worry about such things. These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers all over the world, but your Father already knows your needs. Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and he will give you everything you need." Luke 12.22-31 NLT

What will we do? *Live Simply so that others may simply Live!*

Followers of Jesus live in such a way as to bring transformation to the world around them. Love all people, especially those in need. Listen intently. Pray expectantly. Put your trust in God. No need to build bigger barns. Don't rely on things, possessions, or wealth. Seek God's Kingdom and you will find that God will provide all our needs. Amen.