

w e e k 8 : *the one with the barns*

Scripture to Read: Luke 12:13-21

13 Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” 14 But he said to him, “Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?” 15 And he said to them, “Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.” 16 And he told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich man produced plentifully, 17 and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’ 18 And he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.’ 20 But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ 21 So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”

Summary of Luke 12:13-21

Jesus turns an awkward moment into a teaching moment when a stranger speaks up, demanding that Jesus adjudicate a family inheritance dispute. In response, he tells a story about a wealthy but short-sighted farmer. This story exposes greed.

Scripture for Memorization and Meditation

“Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.” [Luke 12:15]

Questions for Personal Study and/or Group Discussion

- Read v.1-12. What is Jesus teaching his disciples as the crowds gather?
- Why do you think this complete stranger requested Jesus to judge the matter between him and his brother over the inheritance?
- Why do you think Jesus refused this role? Is there anything in the text which indicates that the man was not, in fact, being defrauded?

- What does his reply reveal about the man’s heart? How often are our cries for justice really a whine for a bigger piece of the pie? What are some other ways that our desires (relationship, political causes, effective evangelism, church vision statements) can be fronts for evil desires?
- What is the principal fallacy of greed? What do passages such as Colossians 3:5 and 1 Timothy 6:9-10 add to our diagnosis of the ever-present danger of greed?
- What is “consumerism”? How does Jesus’ teaching in this passage speak to this philosophy of life? In what ways does consumerism take hold in our lives?
- Someone has observed, “A parable does not make a thing easier; it makes it harder...” Do you agree? Why or why not?
- Read v.22-34. How does the story about the barn builder connect to these verses?
- Consider or discuss the following statement. “The modern Western World is built on anxiety. You see it on the faces of people hurrying to work. You see it even more as they travel home, tired but without having solved life’s problems. The faces are weary, puzzled, living with the unanswerable question as to what it all means. This world thrives on people setting higher and higher goals for themselves, and each other, so that they can worry all day and all year about whether they will reach them. If they do, they will set new ones. If they don’t, they will feel they’ve failed. Was this really how we were supposed to live?”

Notes and thoughts...

Why skip v.1-12? We’re skipping v.1-12 for two reasons: 1) in this series our concern is on what Jesus says in “unplugged” settings—that is, informal, one-to-one or smaller group settings; and 2) we are paying special attention to the material in the Travel Narrative that is unique to Luke’s Gospel. The teaching of our Lord in v.1-12 is found also in passages such as Mark 9, Matthew 6, and Matthew 10. For our concerns in this series, things get most interesting in v.13 when an unidentified man speaks up and demands that Jesus settle a dispute over an inheritance.

Why ask Jesus? The man's request is not out of line. Rabbis were, and still are, arbitrators of various disputes in tight-knit conservative Jewish communities.

Someone, call the CDC! "Greed is a nearly invisible sin, a tiny parasite that makes its home in the intestines of wealth...There is no avoiding this condition of wealth, whether we conceive it as a spiritual blessing from God or the material results of a capitalist economy. And all the time the greed virus is in our bloodstream. Sometimes there are enough Scripture antibodies (commandments, proverbs, parables) to protect us against infection. But there are other times when our defenses are lowered and our whole system is fatigued. We get the fever and runny nose of greed. It isn't long before we're thinking about building a bigger barn...Building barns, which is so obviously a good thing, doesn't leave much energy left over for the time-consuming work of loving our neighbors, let alone our God." [Eugene H. Peterson, *Tell It Slant: A Conversation on the Language of Jesus in His Stories and Prayers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 62.]

Tips for Parents with Young Children

The church meeting at your supper table. The following steps are "field-tested" ideas to help direct theological discussions between parents and their children while also building the children's theological vocabularies so that they are increasingly familiar with biblical concepts. Remember: a brief, God-focused time together is better than a long, task-oriented time in which everyone is miserable.

Step 1. Eat with your entire family regularly.

Step 2. Mom and Dad sit next to one another to lead the family discussion.

Step 3. Open the meal by asking if there is anyone or anything to pray for.

Step 4. Someone opens in prayer and covers any requests. This task should be rotated among family members so that different people take turns learning to pray aloud.

Step 5. Discuss how everyone's day went.

Step 6. Have a Bible in front of the parents in a translation that is age-appropriate for their reading level. Have someone (parent or child) open the Bible to the assigned text and read it aloud while everyone is eating and listening.

Step 7. A parent then announces the lesson's "Word of the Day," reading the corresponding definition and/or paraphrasing the meaning at an age-appropriate level.

Step 8. Use some of the discussion questions if your children are older (i.e., junior high and up) and/or the tips for young children if those are more suitable.

Step 9. Let the conversation happen naturally. Listen carefully. Let your children answer the questions. Fill in whatever they miss; lovingly and gently correct whatever they get wrong.

Step 10. If the Scriptures convict you of sin, repent as you need to your family, and share appropriately honest parts of your life story so the kids can see Jesus' work in your life and your need for him too. This demonstrates gospel humility.

Step 11. At the end of the meal, ask the children if they have any questions for you.

The discussion questions and tips are offered to help you and your children grow in relationship with each other and with Christ. They are meant to be supportive and not constraining. Therefore, do not feel bound by any questions or pressured to follow the steps too rigidly. Follow the Spirit's leading and don't be a religious parent who is rigidly inflexible and who makes this time together drudgery rather than delight.

If you miss a night, or if conversation gets off track, or if your family occasionally just wants to talk about something else, don't stress—it's inevitable. For your children, the point is to learn what they are thinking about God, to help them know and love Jesus as God and Savior, and to teach them how to articulate and

explain their Christian faith. For parents, the point is to instruct children and each other, thereby creating a family culture in which every member freely and naturally talks about God and prays to him together. In short, the goal is that your family would open the Bible and grow in love for Jesus, one another, your church, and the world.

Finally, remember that family Bible study requires a sense of humor, so make sure to have some fun, enjoy some laughs, and build some memories.

Monday: Read Luke 12:13-21. Have a talk about the possessions your family has. Ask your child to name some things he has that he considers to be very important. Ask how he would feel if it were lost. Ask him if he thinks he will still love that thing as much when he is older. Read v.15 and talk about it. Thank God for blessing us with the possessions we have. Pray that we will possess our possessions, and not the other way around.

Tuesday: Read Luke 12:16-21. Ask your child why the rich man was a fool. Ask her why possessions cannot make us eternally happy. Pray that no one in your family would be a fool like the rich man in Jesus' parable.

Wednesday: Review what your children learned in Wednesday Night Connection. Spend some time together praying for FPC, its leaders, and your friends at church.

Thursday: Read Luke 12:13-21. Talk about the various ways we get money. Help your child connect God's provision of things for us with the ordinary means by which we receive them (work, gifts, etc.)

Friday: Read Luke 12:22-34. Discuss the comforting things Jesus says in this passage. Does God want us to worry about what we will eat or wear? Why do we worry about money and possessions? How can we show that we do not worry about these things (see v.31).

Saturday: Quiz your children on Catechism questions or Bible memory verses they are learning. Pray that Phillip would have boldness in preaching the Word of God tomorrow. Also, pray for the Sunday School teachers and for the musicians and choir members who serve us each Sunday.

Sunday: Before you leave for church, explain to your children that their ministry at church is to welcome new children, help their Sunday School teacher, serve others, and worship God in the service. After church, discuss with your children what they learned and what you learned.