



Luke 12.13-21

Jesus told this parable in response to a man who wanted more than his legal share of the family estate. The man tried to recruit Jesus as an ally of his covetousness - instead, Jesus warned of the danger of all kinds of greed. The words with which he prefaced the parable speak directly and powerfully to our consumerist, materialist society:-

"A man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

One useful way of analysing the parable which follows is to think about what the rich fool *remembered* and what he *forgot*.

What he remembered

The first thing he remembered was himself! This was a man whose life revolved around himself, his comfort, his security, his possessions. We can see this simply by noticing in his little speech how often the words "I" and "my" come up. (Read vv 17-19). He planned for himself a life of ease and enjoyment, without any other consideration whatsoever. It has been said that Jesus came to abolish the words "I" and "mine" from life and replace them with "we" and "ours". Through this parable Jesus condemns all for whom the word "I" is the most important in the language.

The second thing he remembered was this world with all its wealth and attractions. He had no concept of any other world beyond what he could see and touch. From that perspective his plan made perfect sense. Accumulate and store as much stuff as you can, then sit back and enjoy it for many years to come.

What he forgot

A clue to what this man forgot can be found in Jesus's summary of the law (Matthew 22.36-40).

He actually forgot the most important things of all.

Firstly he forgot his NEIGHBOURS. Faced with the dilemma that his land was producing more crops than he had room to store, the rich man could have looked around and seen many less fortunate or capable people and shared some of his abundance with them. (Remember the parable of the Good Samaritan - anybody in need is our neighbour). But this idea was just not on his radar.



Again his idea of enjoyment was to eat, drink and be merry - no thought for feeding others, or bringing enjoyment to them.

Secondly he forgot his own MORTALITY. Dying that night was not part of his plan (nor anyone's) but it happened to him and it could of course happen to anyone. He had lived as if he were immortal...

Thirdly he forgot GOD - he forgot who the giver is, who the owner is (our life and possessions are only 'on loan') and he made plans for the future without reference to God. We are reminded in James 4.13-15 of the foolishness of this.

As he sat back and poured himself another aperitif, he congratulated himself on his cleverness and good fortune - then to his surprise he heard God's verdict on his life ... "you fool!" and learned to his horror that his life was over.

Finally he forgot that a man's life consists not in what he has but in WHO HE IS. He worked hard at building up a store of things he could not take with him beyond this life and neglected to develop the attributes which do live beyond death...

As we are reminded in Micah 6.8 "What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God."

Not just individuals

All of this warning against living a selfish and greedy lifestyle could be applied to NATIONS as well as INDIVIDUALS. If an individual can be a rich fool, so can a nation, or a group of nations, or a whole cultural system, a way of life.

Life does not consist in the abundance of possessions... Don't the words of Jesus speak to us today? Has there ever been a society more anxious and obsessed about food, drink and clothing? A society which has rejected the truth that God is the provider; a society where people strive and struggle but are never satisfied. A society which exploits poorer and weaker societies by every means possible, but whose material riches are matched by its spiritual poverty.

Make Poverty History campaign reminded us that 800 mil people in the world go hungry each day and a child dies of starvation every 3 seconds (remember the powerful finger click illustration).

We may be poor and dreaming of a more comfortable life.

We may resent other people who have the things we deserve.

Or, like the man in the parable, our barns may be bursting and we may be considering building bigger ones - but surely instead we have a corporate as well as an individual responsibility to change things; by praying, by giving and by campaigning for justice.



St George's Church
BARCELONA

There are encouraging signs of changing attitudes but we must not let them be a flash in the pan.

Remember, Jesus told this parable to everyone present, not just the rich. Because its not about what we have, its about what we DESIRE.

May we understand and truly believe that our lives do not consist of the abundance of our possessions.

May we be people who do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with our God.

And may we seek first the kingdom of God and his justice.