

**Pastor Kyle Mercer**  
Prioritizing Bigger Vision Over Bigger Barns

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Series: Plot Twist  
Luke 12:13-21

**BIG IDEA – YOU NEED A BIGGER VISION THAN BIGGER BARNS**

I hope it's clear, guys. We're not messing around. We're not playing church. Do you see who we're partnering with? That's AIM ministries. They are the most aggressive, frontline ministry I know of. They're the only ministry I know of that has their own SWAT team.

There was a church in California a few years ago, and they did an offering for AIM and called it *Bullets for Jesus*. We're going to call ours *Hold the Rope* still, but the whole thing is... Listen. In America today people say, "I'm against sex trafficking," and they put a red X on their hands, take a picture, and put it on social media. That's all good.

AIM decided, "We are going to move there. We are going to create a SWAT team. We are going to find out where these girls are being abused, and we are going to rescue them in Jesus' name." They partner with local authorities so the bad, evil men go to prison. They get prosecuted. They take these girls... I don't want to give you too much information because it's hard to hear, but they're single-digit ages usually...5, 6, 7, 8.

They bring them... Think Good Samaritan. They bring them to an inn where they can get comprehensive care. The first thing they do with a 7-year-old after giving that 7-year-old some time to breathe is they help them process by trying to draw pictures of what happened to them. They each get their own mom who invests in them and cares for them. They introduce them, most importantly, to Jesus, and then as you heard from her story, when they get older they give them a job.

So, guys, we are so excited to partner. I hope especially the men, the rescuing impulse in your heart... When you hear this, you're going to gather your family tonight and say, "Guys, we've got to give something to Hold the Rope." By the way, our Hold the

Rope offering is an end-of-the-year offering to help our global, local, and national partners go farther faster.

We're asking everyone who calls Two Cities Church home to give a one-time gift before the end of the year to help us help our partners go farther faster. So, that's how we're going to end the year, guys, but today we're ending an era in the life of our church. If you're new, don't come back here next Sunday. We're not going to be meeting here next Sunday.

Five of our seven years have been in this building. By the way, this used to be a rebar warehouse. The building next door used to be a motorcycle shop. When we moved here five years ago from Goler, there were 600 of you who moved with us. We had more than 600 people at the last service. We now have over 2,200 people with us each weekend, and we are ready to climb the next hill together.

Here's what we're going to be doing. We're going online-only next week. You know how much I don't want to do that, but that's what we have to do. The reason we have to do that is we have to take everything and move it. All the kids' stuff we have to move. We're going to need to get more as well. We're doing all that.

So, I'm going to be sending you a brief devotional on the parable of the great banquet. I hope you'll watch it. Maybe you get together with your Community Group, have breakfast on Sunday morning, and watch it together. Then on the 17th we're going to be launching together.

We gave you a "Sit with me" card, the little card you got on your chair. Here's what that is. It's totally up to you. We're never going to just say, "Invite people. Invite people. Invite people." We hope if God is doing something in your life, you probably want him to do it in the people who are far from God and close to you in your life. We're just saying we think the next few weeks with Christmas and with... People love new. Right?

So here we are. We think it's the easiest invite you're ever going to have. It's "Hey, my church just built a big, brand-new building in the center of downtown. Do you want to come?" Because when you think about someone's next spiritual step, you want them to take the smallest step they *could* take that they *would* take, and you want to offer to take it with them. That's why it's a "Sit with me" card.

"What's the smallest step you could take that you would take? Maybe you'd come to church, and maybe I could do that step with you." So, let's take a moment and pray. Let's be expecting, guys, next time I see you in person is going to be in the new building, our new home and hub. Let's pray.

Lord, we thank you for AIM ministries, frontline, aggressive, gospel-centered, rescuing young girls in Jesus' name. We thank you for them. We ask that we would give generously to help them build another inn. We thank you. We pray you would continue to expand their ministry to so many of the dark places in the world. Lord, help us as we are getting ready for this new season you have for us. May this be a sacred and special last service together. We ask all of this in Jesus' name, amen.

Don't answer this out loud, but what is the dumbest thing you've ever done? Not the dumbest thing your spouse has ever done. And if it's illegal, definitely do not tell us. It's kind of funny when people do things that are dumb. We laugh at that, usually, as long as they don't hurt themselves too badly. In fact, the most iconic movie of my generation was *Dumb and Dumber*. Remember this movie? It's funny because guys do things, and it's really dumb, but everyone is okay.

Have you ever heard of the Darwin Awards? I just heard about this this last week. The Darwin Awards are awards that are given in honor of people who died in very dumb ways. I was reading about one of them. A guy decided to try to jet ski off of Niagara Falls. It didn't go well for him. Okay?

It's interesting, because it's one thing to do something dumb that is funny. It's another thing to do something dumb that leads to death. The problem with doing dumb things is it's a universal human condition. Albert Einstein said, "Two things are infinite: the universe and human stupidity, and I'm not sure about the universe." That's what he said.

If you'll type or turn to Luke 12, we're going to be talking about the rich fool today. That's what this parable is called. It's found in Luke 12:13. As soon as I say *rich fool*... Jesus is talking about someone who we might say is pretty dumb. But when I say *rich fool* you go, "Impossible," if you're being honest. You go, "Rich people aren't foolish."

I mean, *rich fool* sounds like an oxymoron, like *jumbo shrimp* or *airplane food* or *Microsoft Works*. These are two words you shouldn't put together, because whenever you meet somebody who's rich... You wouldn't say this out loud, but usually you're like, "What do you know that I don't know? How educated are you? Where did you go to school? What skill set do you have?"

We think *rich* and *fool* don't go together. That's because when we think about *fool* we think about intelligence. When the Bible thinks about *fool*, it's not talking about your IQ. You could be well educated and be a fool. In the Bible (this is just good to know), the word *fool* is a moral judgment. It has nothing to do with your intellect; it has everything to do with your morality.

See, here's what happens. This isn't a sermon on the Proverbs, but let me just tell you this. This will help you understand the Proverbs as you read them. In the Proverbs, there are three guys we meet. We meet Simple. Simple is your 8-year-old son. He's naïve. He's innocent. He's at the beginning of his life. He hasn't made a lot of decisions. We don't know what path he's going to take. The simple guy we meet early in Proverbs.

Then we meet two different guys, Folly and Wisdom. The fool is the guy who makes moral decisions in the wrong direction, and the wise person is the one who makes moral decisions in the right direction. Then do you ever meet the scoffer? Remember him? Who's the scoffer? The scoffer is the fool who's so far down the road he starts to recruit other people to be foolish. Sometimes he has tenure at university. Sometimes he has a YouTube channel. Sometimes he writes *New York Times* best-selling books.

Well, let me tell you where we're going today. Here's the story. If you don't know this story, it's one of Jesus' shortest parables. I hope by the end it'll be obvious why I chose it for today and for our final weekend together. Here's the story. So, this guy is rich already, and we love rich people. The rich are interesting. We're fascinated by them. So, he's this rich guy. Okay. That's interesting.

And he's a rich guy (some of us like this and some of us don't like this) who keeps getting richer. So, he's a rich guy, and his land is producing plentifully. I don't know if he's on a natural gas line. I don't know if he built on oil. I don't know what happened. It says he becomes even more wealthy. (I'm just summarizing the parable. Then we'll look at it.)

I don't know if this guy was reading Dave Ramsey, but he basically decides, "I've got all this money." He says to himself, "I know what I'll do. I'll rip down these barns that aren't that big, and I'll build bigger barns for me." That's basically what every financial planner would tell you to do.

At the end he basically walks upstairs, turns the lights out, looks over at his property, and says, "This is amazing. You've got a lot of property, a lot of possessions, and a lot of time." Then he goes to bed, and he dies in his sleep. He meets God for the first time, and the first words this man hears are "You are a fool, and so is everybody who stores up treasure for themselves and is not rich toward God." End of parable.

This is probably the most difficult parable for Western Christians to hear. So, what I want to do... It's complex. We're going to talk all about a lot of things this morning, but I want to give you the big idea of where we're headed. You and I, as we leave this building and head to the new building... But not just that.

As you leave this year and head to the new year, here's the big idea for the sermon and the text: you need a bigger vision for your life than bigger barns. I'm going to get into it. Is it okay to save? Yes. Is it okay to occasionally build a bigger barn? We'll talk about all that. The sad thing is the man wasn't rich toward God. His life was all about himself. He did not bring God into the equation or think about anybody else's needs.

## 01 BACKGROUND: FAMILIES FIGHT ABOUT FINANCES

With that said, I want you to turn to verse 13. I have to give you the background that leads to this parable. I've told you this before, but there's always a problem before the parable. Here it is. By the way, in verses 1-12, Jesus is just teaching. He's teaching on heaven and hell and the Holy Spirit and all these things.

Here's what verse 13 says: "***Someone in the crowd said to him...***" Imagine him teaching. "***Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.***" Could you imagine if I were up here (this guy doesn't even ask a question) and someone just started yelling out to me to do something? Could you imagine I'm up here and someone says, "Tell my coworkers to be nice to me," and I'm like, "Pastor Dave, is that you? This is not the time." No.

I will tell you... I've been preaching week in and week out for about seven years, and this has happened three to five times. Somebody starts to talk to me in the middle... It's awkward for me. It's awkward for them. It's awkward for everybody. This guy gets to the point where he doesn't even ask a question. He gives Jesus a command.

Now, what's very interesting... You shouldn't be surprised by this. I love how honest the Bible is. Do you see how this whole parable is going to start? Do you see the context? Do you see the problem? Here it is: families fighting over finances. Have you ever seen this? I've seen this with my extended family. I've seen this with friends of mine.

People are normal until you talk to them about money. So, if you ever want to meet a person... You know, we have our personas. Our personas are our simplified selves that we interact with everybody with. If you want to meet the real person, start talking to them about their money.

I had an experience. You know, I haven't always done *this*. Before I did *this*, I was in college ministry. When I was in college ministry, I had to raise support. So, to me, I've been talking to people about money for 20 years. But *this* is easy. To talk to all of you broadly about money, that's easy.

To go to someone's house when they know you're going to ask them for money, and to sit across the table from them and say, "I would love you to come on my support team for \$100 a month..." I promise you you meet the real person. People don't like when you talk about money. I shouldn't say all people don't like it. People who don't like when you talk about money... It's because money is their god.

If you started talking about Jesus in ways I didn't like and I thought were inappropriate and I thought were wrong, I would get offended. Why? Because Jesus is my God. The exact same thing happens to people when you talk to them about money. So, this guy interrupts... Money, by the way, is on his mind. That's why he talks to Jesus about it.

How much is money on *your* mind? How much are you checking your investments? How much are you looking at your bank statements? I had an experience with this. Don't judge me, but a couple of years ago I found the Robinhood app. Some of you won't know what this is, but anyone under 40 will definitely know what this is.

The Robinhood app is this app that lets you do investing really easily on your phone. I also discovered cryptocurrency. I wasn't the earliest adopter of it, but I was a fairly early adopter of cryptocurrency. I put a little bit of money in cryptocurrency, and I thought about it all the time. I would check it all the time. Money is a powerful thing.

Here's the thing. He says, "I want my brother to split the inheritance with me." Here's how it worked at this point in Jewish history. The older brother, the eldest son, would get two-thirds of any inheritance, and the rest of the one-third would be split with all of the other children.

So, let's just say there are two brothers. This is obviously the younger brother. Here's what he's saying: "I don't want one-third of the inheritance; I want half." Guys, money is important. We'll talk about a bunch of things about money today, but money is important. I mean, how big is this inheritance, and how big of a difference is half to a third?

Maybe this guy is thinking, "I need to get half because it'll affect where I can send my kids to college or the health care I could have or the home I could buy, or maybe I could retire seven years earlier if I had half of the inheritance." Money is a powerful reality in our lives.

Well, let's see how Jesus responds. Jesus is not caught off guard. Here's what he says. **"But he said to him, 'Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?'"** Jesus isn't interested (this is maybe not going to be encouraging to you) in solving your problems immediately as much as he is in changing your heart.

He could try to solve the problem. "Well, here's what you need to happen." But here's what he says instead. I want you to see this. This is even before the parable. **"And he said to them..."** If you underline your Bible, you might want to underline *them*. Who's *them*? Well, everybody listening, because the love of money is a temptation for everybody.

He doesn't just say to the one guy, "Hold on. I want to talk to you for a second." He gets confronted by this guy and says, "Hold on. Everybody in here, this is for all of you." Then he says, **"Take care..."** By the way, that is not a Southern goodbye. "Take care." That's not what this is. This is "Watch out!"

**"Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness..."** Then look. Does anyone even believe this? **"...for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."** Now, if I said to you, "Take care" or "Be on guard" (those are two different warnings)... If I said to you, "Hey, guys..." And maybe I was able to say this to each of you.

Imagine this. I said, "Hey, listen. I don't know how this happened, but we did find out that there is a burglar in your neighborhood. The police have tried to catch him, but they haven't. They're hoping to, but he's still out there. So, when you go home tonight, be on guard." What would you do? You would immediately put your alarm system on. You would check all of your windows. You would call your neighbors.

You would take action steps if we said there was a burglar and that you should be on guard, but often, when Jesus says something or I get up here and quote Jesus about guarding on covetousness and guarding against greed, we go, "Eh, I hope someone else is listening to this."

Why does he say, "Guard against greed"? A lot of times, Jesus doesn't say to guard against something, because some sins are obvious. He doesn't say, "Guard against lust" because everyone is going to go, "Fine. I struggle with that." But nobody wants to admit they struggle with greed.

So, he says, "Guard against all types of covetousness." There's not one type. By the way, coveting made God's top 10. There are 10 commandments. The tenth one is "Do not covet." It's the only completely internal of the Ten Commandments. The apostle Paul later said it's the commandment that got him, that really convicted him.

The reason we think it's last and internal is because it's really the sin under many other sins. Why do you lie? Well, there are 25 reasons you lie, but it usually has to do with "I covet this person's approval of me, so I want to sound better than I am or not as bad as I am," one of those two. You only steal after you first coveted. You only commit adultery after you first coveted.

Notice he says, "All types of covetousness." You see, the older you get, the more ridiculous the things you covet are. I'm to the point in my life now where I covet other people's lawns. My soul has shrunk to the size of other people's lawns. I go over to other people's houses, and I come home and am like, "I want more stainless steel appliances."

Coveting is a desire that makes you discontent and often resent other people. That's what coveting does. It destroys your capacity to enjoy what you have. We've all had this experience. Right? I live in, I would consider, a fairly average, normal home, and most times I'm grateful for it...until I go over to my friend's house who has, like, 10-foot ceilings. I'm like, "Whoa!" Then I come back to my house, and I'm like, "How do I even walk around in here? These eight-foot ceilings."

I remember somehow we got upgraded to a really nice car when we were out west one time. I have a decent car, but I got into this car, and not just the seats were heated but the steering wheel was heated and it had Apple CarPlay. Then I got back into my car, and I was like, "How have I ever driven this thing? This thing is..."

It makes us discontent and (this is the darker part of it) often resent other people. We resent that they can send their kids to private school. We resent that they have a second home. We resent how healthy they are. We resent how well behaved their children are. It's a desire that makes you discontent and often resent other people.

Now, what's interesting about Jesus is he says, "Do not covet," but he gives us a reason why. Now, here's what I want you to understand. In religion, which Christianity is not religious in the wooden sense... In religion and moralism, you tell people not to do things because they're bad.

Some of you grew up in a religious home. A religious home basically tells you, "Do not do that because it's bad." It's like, "Well, I need more..." That'll work when they're 3, but when a person gets older, it's like, "Well, I need some reasons, because it's a lot of fun to do bad things."

So, Jesus says, "Do not covet, because that's not what life is about." Did you see that? Let me read it again. ***"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.'"***

Now, here's what I think. I think we believe the first thing Jesus says. I don't think it's hard. I can be done teaching on it. I think anybody can look around and say, "Yeah, coveting is going to make me discontent. It's a thief of contentment. It's going to make me bitter and resentful toward other people, and I shouldn't do it." We get that.



I don't know that we really believe the second part that the quality of our life is not connected to the abundance of our possessions. I don't know if you've ever heard of Grant Cardone. Grant Cardone I don't think is a Christian that I know of. I checked last night. He has 4.5 million Instagram followers. I am one of them.

He does the 10X life. He's an interesting guy. He's a good-looking guy in his 60s. He's a type of person. There are many of these people on social media and out there. His whole messaging is basically, "Make as much money as you possibly can, because your life will be so much better if you do." It's what we might call *consumerism* or *materialism*. "The more I have in my hands, the happier I'll be in my heart."

When I watch him, there's part of me that thinks... You know, I know Scripture, so I'm like, "This isn't true. This isn't true." Then I'm thinking, "Well, Lord, would I be happier if I had a ski-in/ski-out lodge on the West Coast? I think I would. Would I be happier if I had a private jet? Yes. No TSA. No coach. No connecting flights."

It's hard for us to believe that if we have more stuff in our hands we won't be happier in our hearts. That's why if I quote you, "Oh, that's not what life is about," it's like, "Well, what do you know, Kyle?" but it's interesting that Jim Carrey, the great Jim Carrey... Jim Carrey, the actor and comedian, in the early 2000s was one of the most famous people in the world.

Remember, he had done *Ace Ventura*, then *Ace Ventura: When Nature Calls*, then *The Mask*, then *Dumb and Dumber*, then *The Cable Guy*, then *Liar Liar* and *The Truman Show*. There was a point he was on the cutting edge of being one of the only actors in the world who, at the time, got paid \$20 million for a 90-minute movie.

Now, it takes about three months to film a movie, but imagine making \$20 million in three months, and then doing it again and again and again and again. Well, here's what he said. He said this recently. He's now 62 years old. He basically said, "I wish every person could become rich and famous and do everything they ever wanted to do to realize that's not what life is about."

Again, if I say that you're like, "You don't know what you're talking about." When Jim Carrey says that it's like, "Okay. Maybe this guy is on to something." But this is hard for us to understand, so again, Jesus has to tell us a parable. So, that's all as we head into the parable.

## 02 JESUS TELLS A PARABLE ABOUT A RICH MAN TO EVERYONE

Here's what he says. "***And he told them a parable...***" So, the parable is in response to this problem. It's in response to greed. "***...saying, 'The land of a rich man produced***

***plentifully...*** " As soon as we start talking about this and I say, "Okay. Jesus tells a parable about a rich man," all of us go, "Phew! Okay. Not about me. Thank goodness. I'm not rich." We all want to say that.

You're like, "All right. Okay, Kyle. I get it. I just hope Mark Zuckerberg is listening. I hope Elon Musk has the livestream. Jeff Bezos..." We don't think we're rich. *Rich* is not a feeling. How do you know you're rich? I'm not going to do the things I've done in the past to tell you if you make more than \$30,000 you're in the top 1 percent in the world. What I will tell you is, literally, the definition of *rich* in the Bible is to have more than you need. That is literally the definition.

People will be like, "I don't want to be rich. I just don't want to ever have to think about money." That's the definition of being rich. Think about it this way. I can prove to you that you're rich in a different way. Have you ever run out of hangers in your closet? You're like, "I have more clothes than I have hangers, which means I have to get rid of some of these clothes or I've got to go to Costco and get more hangers."

Have you ever not been able to park your car in your garage because all the stuff that should be in your house is in your garage so your car is still outside? Have you ever gotten home from the grocery store, opened the fridge, and were like, "There's no room in the fridge for all of the groceries I just bought"? We have so much.

Jesus tells this parable. Now, a couple of things. He doesn't say anything bad about the rich man to begin with. It is not a sin to be rich, even very, very, very rich. It's not a sin to be poor. Some churches teach prosperity theology. We don't teach that here. *Prosperity theology* is some version of "The richer you are the more God must love you." We also do not teach poverty theology. *Poverty theology* teaches "The poorer you are the more God must love you."

The Bible says there's godly poor and ungodly poor, and there's godly rich and ungodly rich. It's not a virtue to be rich, and it's not a virtue to be poor. You might be surprised at me saying this. Do not apologize for being rich. Do not apologize for being really rich. We live in a society right now that wants to weaponize guilt, and it's easy to make people feel guilty. All of a sudden you make a lot of money, and you're like, "Oh, gosh. I feel so guilty." We'll get there. You don't feel guilty; you feel grateful.

You're like, "Listen. You're not going to weaponize your guilt against me, play the victim card, use the privilege language, and make me feel guilty about this. We're not playing that game. Here's what I'm going to do instead. I'm just going to be very, very grateful, I'm going to be very, very responsible, and I'm going to be very, very generous with everything I have, but I'm not going to feel guilty about what I have."

But here's the interesting thing. We have to learn a lot about money today. The first thing we learn is... Did you notice who gets the credit, by the way? If you read verse 16, who gets the credit? The land does. ***"The land of a rich man produced plentifully..."*** Jesus is giving the dirt a lot of credit.

This is a teaching. He's telling us something in story that he teaches other places, which is that God gives people the ability and opportunity to make money. For example, if all of us were born in the second century in India, we'd all be poor. It doesn't matter how smart you are. It doesn't matter how hardworking you are. It doesn't matter.

We know that the number-one predictor of financial wealth in the Western world is how high your IQ is. The best predictor of whether or not someone will be wealthy is how high their IQ is. Guys, we cannot change our IQs. If you figure out how to increase somebody's IQ, the Nobel Peace Prize for you. I mean, we can't do it.

Okay. The number-one determining factor of whether or not a person will be wealthy happens at their birth. So, what you start to do is go, "Okay, God. Thank you for my..." Some people go, "Well, I'm so driven." Where do you think that comes from? You start to realize all of these things are gifts from God.

### **03 WHAT DID THE RICH MAN DO WRONG?**

Look at what happens next. ***"...and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?'"*** We're going to get here in a few minutes. You should ask questions when you have more than enough. The problem is he asks himself. He thinks about it but doesn't pray about it. That's the difference: thinking about it and not praying about it.

Then here's what he says. ***"And he said..."*** By the way, this guy is so self-centered there are 11 personal pronouns used in this parable. 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."***

Okay. I have never done this before, but I think the best thing for me to do in this time to explain this is I'm going to try to explain the four principles the Bible teaches about money that we have to hold in tension to understand this parable. You know, you can have a low-resolution reading of something. A low resolution of reading this parable would be, "Rich people are bad and saving money is bad. Throw all of your Dave Ramsey books away." That's not what we're saying here.

So, I want to try to give us four principles. You'll see this in a minute. They're very hard to hold in tension together, but here's why I have to teach this. I know how every cult or every false religion starts. They all start basically the same way: a man or woman alone with their Bible in the middle of the woods. This man or this woman finds a passage of Scripture that they think teaches a new universal truth to the exclusion of everything else the Bible says.

This is why we say here, "It takes the whole Bible to make the whole Christian." This is why I'm getting up here until I die and weekly teaching another passage from the Scripture, and we're going to put it all together over several decades. It takes the whole Bible to make the whole Christian. So, I'm going to give you the four principles from Scripture about money that you're going to need and that we're embracing as a church.

Here's the first principle: *building wealth can often be wise*. Don't feel bad about saving. You don't read this parable and go, "Okay." You don't go home and go, "Honey, no more 401(k) for us. Our 529 accounts for the kids...no. No investments. No emergency fund. We're not allowed to save anything."

The Bible teaches saving. Proverbs is probably the clearest place it teaches it. In Proverbs 6 it says to the sluggard, "Hey, don't be lazy. Look to the ant." Oh, the ant stores up. Another verse in Proverbs says the crown of the wise is their wealth. Proverbs 13:22 says, "A wise man leaves an inheritance to his children's children."

I want you to think for a second. Many of us may not be able to do that, and that's fine, but I just want you to understand how much money a person is going to need to save across their life so that when they die they have something to give to all of their kids and all of their kids' kids. Well, somebody somewhere was saving a lot of money. So, it's okay to save. We'll get into some questions we can ask about that.

But I think we know, not just with money but with stuff... We have so much stuff. Example: storage units. You know, I want our city to grow and be fruitful and all that, so a couple of years ago I saw they were building this beautiful brick building right next to the Winston-Salem Dash, and I was like, "Put in some apartments. Put in some condos." It's a storage unit! Have you seen this? There are five times as many storage units as there are Starbucks. We have a problem.

Here's one of the ways, culturally, to know you have a problem. You know the culture has a problem when the world starts having secular answers to it. The secular answer to having way too much stuff is minimalism. Mom blogs, Netflix shows, and social media accounts all about minimalism, because even the world knows we have too much stuff. So, the Bible teaches in many places, but explicitly in the Proverbs, that it's good to save money.

Second principle. All of these words are important. We are to be *joyfully, willingly, and sacrificially generous*. How do you do both? Okay. Here's another teaching from Scripture: you are blessed to be a blessing. God gives people more than they need so they can give it to people in need.

Now listen. This is not the mandatory redistribution of wealth. This is not some modern form of socialism or communism. That's why the words *willingly* and *voluntary* are so key. It's that God gives people affluence and influence... Those often come together, but not always. God will give people affluence and influence for people who don't have affluence or influence.

So, here's what happens. This is a great example. This is the time of year this happens. Even non-Christian, secular families in our city... The kids go to bed, and the wife and husband are talking to each other, and they say something like this. "How many Nintendo Switch games do our kids need this year? I mean, how big is Christmas going to be? How much are we going to...? Are we just going to spoil our kids?"

Maybe they say something like, "You know what? I heard about this ministry down the street. It's for single moms who can't afford to get their kids something. Maybe we have enough money that we could buy our kids a nice Christmas and help somebody else have a nice Christmas."

So, at one level that's nice. It's like, "Okay." We are blessed to be a blessing, and we have more than enough, and then we should give more than enough to other people willingly and voluntarily, but there's another part of generosity. This is the hard part. Jesus is supposed to be the model and example of what it looks like to be sacrificially generous.

I mean, you read 2 Corinthians 8 and 9. Jesus gave it all. Jesus was unbelievably sacrificial, and the Bible speaks of us giving to the place where it hurts. So, I don't know. How do you save enough money so you have this, that, and the other thing that you feel like God is calling you to do (that's wise) and you're able to be sacrificial?

Here's what we know: you can't just give everything away. Say I got really emotional during the last song we're going to sing here. I'm so emotional, and afterward I just say, "That's it. I no longer want to receive a salary from this church." Then I go home and talk to my wife and kids and say, "Guys, that's it. Not that we have a lot, but we're liquidating all of it...everything. We're giving it all away."

The moment I do that and it all leaves, what happens? I become a dependent person. So, if all of us decided this morning to give everything away, that would not be good,

because then we just become needy, and we all go on the benevolence fund in our church, but there's no one to give to our church anymore. It doesn't work.

The first principle is we have to build wealth to be wise. The second principle is we have to be joyfully, willingly, and sacrificially generous. C.S. Lewis said the only safe rule is to give until you're scared or to give more than you think you can or to give until you can't do something you otherwise would like to do. It's something to wrestle with.

The third principle is *God gives us material possessions for our enjoyment here*. See, there are two extremes in life. There is hedonism and asceticism. *Hedonism* says, "Everything I have is for me and for my immediate pleasure here and now." *Asceticism* says, "The godlier I am, the holier I am, the better a person I am, and the more moral I am is the more things in this world that I say no to."

One of the teachings from Scripture from Genesis 1 is "Be fruitful and multiply." God is a good God who loves to bless his kids. If every time I gave something to my kids they said, "I'm going to give it to someone else," I'd be like, "Uh, okay." Why does food taste good? Why does drink taste good? Why are lakes and mountains and beaches so beautiful? It's okay...

Now we have extremes. I would say probably most people feel a little bit too free to enjoy the finer things in life too often, but I'm always talking to a lot of people. For some of you, your conscience is so sensitive you struggle to enjoy the things God gives you, and you constantly feel guilty. You can't do that.

The game of "How much are we going to sacrifice..." You're going to have a mental breakdown if you play this. Say a couple decides after this, "All right. We're going to be more sacrificial, and we're not going to enjoy as many things." So the wife says, "I've got an idea. No more nice restaurants eating out. Instead, we're going to give it all away. No more Ryan's. No more Fratellis. No more Rooster's. We're not going there anymore."

The husband says, "Well, then why don't we just not go out to eat at all? We'll just eat at home." The wife says, "You're right. That'll save us even more money, and we can give *that* away. I've got it! But when we eat at home, we will not eat meat." Then they decide, "Here's what we're going to do. We're just going to eat rice and beans the rest of our lives."

Then the wife goes to the store and comes home with rice and beans, and the husband says, "Why didn't you buy the store brand? They were 14 cents cheaper." You understand. We need to wrestle with that. Some of us aren't wrestling with any

of our financial decisions and our sacrifices, but it doesn't work. It's just not going to be a healthy home if that's constantly... You have to hold these in tension.

The fourth principle is the most important principle. It's why I saved it to last. First, it's often wise to build wealth. The second principle is we must be sacrificially, joyfully, and willingly generous. Thirdly, we have to enjoy the things God has given us. Fourthly, in all of it we have to *love the Creator more than the creation*. God has to be our treasure instead of treasures.

See, the reason money is so powerful (this took me a long time to figure out) is it makes so many promises. What makes God amazing and one of the main ways God speaks to us is through promise, but money can do the same thing. Money can basically say, "Listen. Unless you get stage 4 pancreatic cancer, I can heal you. We'll get you to a Mayo Clinic. If you have enough of me, we'll get you to a Mayo Clinic very, very quickly."

Money can say, "Listen, dude. There are a lot of pressures in life, but I promise finances will never be one of them." God says in Psalm 16, "There are pleasures at my right hand forevermore," and money says, "There are pleasures at *my* hand forevermore."

So, the temptation is we believe the lie. There's a lie of money, but there's a lie of stuff. Here's the lie of stuff: "If you love me, I will love you back." Your car does not love you. Your house does not love you. Your iPhone does not love you. You have to hold in tension these four truths.

#### **04 PLOT TWIST: THE RICH MAN IS NOT READY TO MEET GOD**

Let me show you what happens here. He goes on. He says in verse 19, ***"And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.'" But God...*** Sometimes when the phrase *but God* shows up you should get the warm and fuzzies. "Oh, but God, being rich in mercy..." This is not one of those. This is one of those terrifying "But Gods."

***"But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."*** This is the first time God is mentioned, and that's the problem. God isn't mentioned in this parable or in this story or in this man's thoughts until right now.

Here's what happens. The man dies. Imagine this happening to you. Imagine you go home and go to bed and you die in your sleep, and this is the first thing you hear:

"Idiot!" Like, "Lord, is that you?" "Moron!" You're like, "It's nice to meet you, Lord. Uh, that's not what I was hoping to hear when I met you for the first time."

He's called a fool. He did two things wrong, at least. First, he was completely selfish. He thought everything he had he gained by himself. He thought everything he had was *for* himself. It's the sin of selfishness. It's the sin of narcissism. It's the sin of pride. It is the greatest sin. He also had the sin of presumption. The sin of presumption is "I think I have more time than I do." He thought he had 20 or 30 years left. His soul was going to be taken from him that night.

## **05 PRACTICAL: WE SHOULD BE WILLING TO WRESTLE WITH SOME TOUGH QUESTIONS**

I want us to go back as we close and go to verse 17. I want us to look at a couple of things here that I think are helpful as we wrestle together what this looks like. Verse 17 says, "**...and he thought to himself...**" He didn't pray, but he thought. "**What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?**" I want us to be a church that's rich toward God. If we're going to be rich toward God, we have to ask a couple of questions.

The first question we have to ask... Here's what wealth does, guys. Wealth creates choice. That's what it does. When you don't have a lot of money, you don't have a lot of choices. Meet someone who doesn't have a lot of money and you'll meet someone who has very few choices...very few choices of where to live, very few choices of what to eat, very few choices of where they can go on vacation. Wealth and choice are synonymous. So, as soon as you have more than enough, you have choices.

Here are a couple of questions you have to ask. First, "What will I do when I have more than enough?" Here's what happens. I want to talk to the older generation in our church and the younger generation. The older generation... We'll do it in reverse. I'll talk to you first. Here's what happens with older people.

They were a family of five or a family of six. There were some tight times, but here's what has happened if they're just a normal family and have been productive and climbed the ladder and saved money. All of a sudden, one day they wake up, and they're in their 50s or 60s.

They say, "I cannot believe it. This is amazing. We just made our last mortgage payment, the kids are off the payroll, and the tuition is paid. It's just the two of us, and we're 58. We're going to live for another 20 or 30 years. We've kind of always had more than enough, but now we really have more than enough."



As you get older, you're going to have to ask... There are going to be seasons where you're going to go, "I have more than enough." Then there are the younger people in our church. Sociologists would call a lot of people in our church what's called the *emerging affluent*. You will make more money in the future than you make right now.

A couple of years ago... This guy was not in our church, but I had a friend. He went to Cleveland Clinic to be a cardiologist. Cleveland Clinic is a top two or three program for cardiology. He went to do his fellowship. If you understand... Not that I do, but I know a little bit about this. If you understand medicine, there's medical school, then there's residency, and if you're going to go on to do something more specialized you do fellowship, and then you get to be an attending doctor.

He was doing a five-year fellowship at Cleveland Clinic, which is this super-detailed cardiology fellowship. We're friends, and I knew him before he went there. He called me one day and said... I don't remember exactly what he made. It doesn't matter. You know, imagine an okay salary. He said, "Here's what's going to happen. I kind of know the job I'm going to get. When I get out of this fellowship, I'm a little nervous."

I said, "Why?" He said, "Because I'm going to make seven times what I make." He said, "What should I do?" I said, "The answer is simple. You move to Two Cities Church and start tithing." I didn't say that. That's an extreme example, but here's what happens. Many of us are going to have that moment where we're going to have to go, "Okay. I have more than enough."

Then you're going to have to ask *this* question. Well, you probably need to ask this question before. "What is enough?" We're not going to get religious. We're not going to get wooden. We're not going to get like a cult, and we're not going to judge each other for drawing the lines in different places.

*Forbes* magazine this month (very interesting) came out with a study, because they're worried about the economy, they're worried about inflation, and they're worried about interest rates. They came out with this study, a nationwide study. How much do Americans think today in 2023...? This is real time.

How much do Americans think they need to be happy? Answer: \$284,000 a year. When they just isolated Millennials, it was \$500,000 a year. Pray for the Millennials. They're about to be depressed very soon. Listen. You're never going to feel rich if you spend 110 percent of what you make. You're never going to feel rich if you start confusing needs with wants.

The third question is, "How much am I going to give?" We're not going to get wooden and religious on this. The Bible teaches the tithe. We believe in that, but I think you could at least say this: not nothing and not everything. If you're still a part of the

people who say you're a Christian but you give nothing to the kingdom of God, you need to write your name next to *rich fool*. Picture of yourself right next to there. Generosity is one of the signs that I own my stuff and stuff doesn't own me.

## **06 TAKEAWAY: BE RICH TOWARD GOD**

So, here's our heart, guys. As we close in this building, here's our desire: we want to be rich toward God. What does it look like to be rich toward God? I think it's very, very simple. I'm going to give you three things to be rich toward God. First... This is a common theme. I realized after I preached this last night, talking to people outside, this is even more common than I thought.

The number-one thing if you want to be rich toward God is you acknowledge God and thank God for everything he has given you. That's where it has to start. The problem with the rich fool is there's no gratefulness. "Lord, thanks for this land, and thanks for my money. Thanks that I ended up being on this land that's so plentiful. Just thanks for everything."

By the way, some of you are wondering, "How do I talk to my kids about God in ways that aren't weird and religious?" You don't want to be the religious dad. It's like, "Oh, there's Dad talking about the Canaanites and circumcision again." You know, that's the religious dad.

Here's what you want to do. You want to go on vacation with your kids and say something like, "This is unbelievable. I am so grateful God gave me enough money to take you guys on vacation." You want to look at your house and go, "This is unbelievable. Guys, I can't believe God would give us a house like *this*." You just start doing that. That'll change your heart.

The second thing you have to decide today... You have to realize that stuff cannot save your soul. See, what happened with this man is he only thought about himself and not his soul. What you're going to find today is there's a lot of conversation about the self; there's very little conversation about the soul.

There's self-care and self-help and self-awareness and self-esteem. Do you know what's missing? The soul. The self is you minus your soul and minus a future. See, here's what the resurrection does. The resurrection changes what it means to be rich. We cannot take it with us, but we can send it ahead. I told you at the beginning you need a bigger vision than bigger barns.

Actually, you need a vision of different barns, which is the third thing. We want to build a bunch of different barns for different people in different needs as we move

into this new building. What if this man would have said what Job said? Do you know what Job said when he was confronted, when he was struggling through everything? He said, "I love to make the heart of the widow sing."

What if he said, "I'm going to build a barn for needy people. I'm going to build another barn for Hold the Rope, and I'm going to build another barn for unique opportunities." God has made Two Cities Church at Northwest Boulevard a very plentiful place. The land here has produced much. So, as we close this service, we want to honor God in it. We want to commit to being generous, and we want to be committed not to building bigger barns but different barns for our city, for our nation, and for the world. Let's pray.

Lord, help us to do it. It's a hard teaching. Lord, help us to be rich toward you. Lord, some of us right now need to rip down some barns in our hearts, some idols, some coveting, some greed. Those barns need to come down, and I need to build a bigger barn of worship toward Christ. Lord, would you help us? As we sing our final song in the building, would we together commit to being rich toward God? In Jesus' name, amen.