

Sermon for August 2, 2025 – 8th Sunday after Pentecost

Luke 12:13–21 (EHV)

Theme: **Guard yourself against all greed.**

- 1) Your life is not found in your possessions,
- 2) But in your relationship with Christ.

¹³Someone from the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” ¹⁴But Jesus said to him, “Man, who appointed me to be a judge or an arbitrator over you?” ¹⁵Then he said to them, “Watch out and be on guard against all greed, because a man’s life is not measured by how many possessions he has.” ¹⁶He told them a parable: “The land of a certain rich man produced very well. ¹⁷He was thinking to himself, ‘What will I do, because I do not have anywhere to store my crops?’ ¹⁸He said, ‘This is what I will do. I will pull down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and goods. ¹⁹And I will tell my soul, “Soul, you have many goods stored up for many years. Take it easy. Eat, drink, and be merry.”’ ²⁰“But God said to him, ‘You fool, this night your soul will be demanded from you. Now who will get what you have prepared?’ ²¹“That is how it will be for anyone who stores up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”

Do you struggle with greed? If you are anything like me, you might initially answer, “I don’t think so. I try to live modestly, give a decent offering to church, and help people whenever possible.”

But here is the thing: you could do everything I mentioned and still be greedy. How? By pursuing earthly goals ahead of God, seeking happiness and security from physical blessings instead of the LORD himself.

Because greed is far more subtle and dangerous than we imagine, Jesus warns against it. With the parable of the foolish farmer as our guide, let us heed Jesus’ warning to **guard ourselves against all greed.** 1) Your life is not found in your possessions, 2) but in your relationship with Christ.

Part One: Your life is not found in your possessions.

Imagine thousands of people gathered to hear Jesus preach. As He encouraged His disciples with how the Holy Spirit would teach them what to say when called to defend their faith before rulers and authorities,ⁱ *¹³someone from the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”*

Can you believe the impetuosity of this man? Jesus had just encouraged his followers to be fearless in the face of persecution by relying on God’s Spirit, and this man interrupts Jesus to discuss a family squabble. What possessed him to do that?

Let's consider the situation from the man's perspective. Inheritances were so important to the Jews that God regulated them through the Mosaic law. The man's dad died, and his brother refused him what was fair. His family could have been counting on the inheritance to make ends meet. Wouldn't you be furious if a family member cheated you out of an inheritance? Wouldn't you want to bring your complaint to Jesus, asking Him to get your brother to do what is right? Considering things from that perspective, we can understand why the man did what he did. His timing was terrible, but it's not like the content of his request was all that bad, was it?

Maybe not from a human point of view, but the way Jesus saw it, this man was in danger of falling into a deceptive sin that has filled hell with many seemingly upright people: the sin of greed. And I want to pause here to make an essential point about this sin: greed even includes coveting the things that are lawfully yours. Let me repeat: the sin of greed even includes coveting the things that are lawfully yours. That is why Jesus warns against all greed.

¹⁴ But Jesus said to him, "Man, who appointed me to be a judge or an arbitrator over you?"

God the Father did not anoint Jesus as the Messiah to decide civil cases. He gave us the gift of human government and judges to handle such matters. Jesus came to accomplish something far more important: our salvation from sin.ⁱⁱ This man's "stolen" inheritance was nothing compared to the eternal inheritance Jesus offered him through faith in the Gospel. Sadly, this man was so focused on petty, earthly things that he was in danger of losing the eternal treasure God offered him in Christ.

Knowing how all people are tempted to seek security and happiness in created things rather than their Creator, Jesus addressed the crowd: *"Watch out and be on guard against all greed, because a man's life is not measured by how many possessions he has."*

Greed is not a sin confined to criminals, corporations, and corrupt government officials. Greed tempts everyone. We all like to think we deserve a certain "quality of life," and that pursuing material happiness is an "inalienable human right." Doesn't the world even encourage us to pursue, acquire, and experience whatever brings us joy?

How different are Jesus' words from those of the world! Our life is not found in the abundance of things, experiences, and ease we accumulate for ourselves. No, as we read in our Epistle lesson for this Sunday, *"your life is hidden with Christ in God."*ⁱⁱⁱ

To illustrate how dangerous greed is, ¹⁶*He told them a parable: "The land of a certain rich man produced very well."*

Notice that this rich man is not described as a crook or a thief. No, he is a man just like any other. You could imagine him as honest and hardworking, a man who always paid his taxes and did not cheat his neighbours. You could imagine him as outwardly moral - a man who attended church regularly and even gave offerings to the LORD. This rich man could be any of us here. He could even be you.

The LORD blessed that man with a good crop. That would be like you earning more than you expected from your investments or receiving an unexpected raise in your salary. The point is that the LORD gave him a gift.

¹⁷*He was thinking to himself, 'What will I do, because I do not have anywhere to store my crops?'*

¹⁸*He said, 'This is what I will do. I will pull down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and goods. ¹⁹And I will tell my soul, "Soul, you have many goods stored up for many years. Take it easy. Eat, drink, and be merry."*

After receiving the unexpected blessing, the man considered his life goals and planned to retire well. And what's wrong with that? He was not stealing, cheating, or planning anything illegal. He was not even coveting anything that didn't already belong to him. He did what modern-day bank and investment commercials advise you to do: save and invest to live your retirement dreams.

²⁰*"But God said to him, 'You fool, this night your soul will be demanded from you. Now who will get what you have prepared?'* ²¹*"That is how it will be for anyone who stores up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."*

Did you catch what was wrong with the man's plan? Based on our English translation of the text, it might seem as if God was upset that the man didn't use his extra income for church or charity. However, if we translate the last phrase as Luther did - *this is how it goes for the one who gathers treasures and is not rich in God^{ly}* – then we understand that the man's real problem was his relationship with God. Instead of recognizing and rejoicing in how graciously the LORD blessed his earthly life, all he thought about was himself, making his earthly life into a god. Just look at how many times he references himself in his brief speech, but does not once mention the LORD. He neither thanked nor involved God in his plans. The LORD is entirely off his mind as he focuses only on his extra income and how to use it to his advantage.

Do you see the relevance of Jesus' parable for you today? Haven't you been like this man at one point or another: forgetting to thank God for His blessings or neglecting to seek His guidance on how you can use them to His glory? Even if you have never stolen, cheated, or coveted anything that was not yours, there have been times when you put things like your house, vacation, car, investments, or other things ahead of the LORD. How? By being more concerned about these things than your relationship with God. That is nothing less than idolatry – sinning against the first commandment! How so? Because your thoughts and actions reveal a heart that is more concerned about doing what you can to live a good life than glorifying God with His gifts. And if you don't repent of this sin, you will end up like the farmer in the parable: dead and apart from God and His goodness.

May the realization of this truth lead us all to pray: "Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner. Forgive me for lusting after the things of this world, failing to thank you for all the blessings you give me, and worrying about my earthly life instead of trusting in you. Help me remember that my life and happiness are not found in the things I own or do. My true life is found only in you.

Part Two: Your life is found in your relationship with Christ.

If Jesus' warning against greed has led you to offer up such a prayer of repentance, then know this: the LORD forgives your sins for Jesus' sake. The whole reason He spoke this parable was to get us to repent – redirecting our thoughts off ourselves and onto His promises. Jesus loves you dearly – so much so that he gave up everything to become like you.^v He lived the perfect life of selfless love for God and humanity that we all failed to live. Jesus died for your sins on the cross – paying for them in full. He rose again to prove your forgiveness. Through faith in Jesus, you stand at peace with God – reconciled and righteous because of His work.

Understand why Jesus did all that for you: not that you could go on living selfishly, doing whatever you want without thinking of Him. No, He saved you so that you would seek His kingdom and righteousness, trusting that He, your almighty God and Saviour, will provide you with everything you need for life.^{vi} He saved you so that you might show others the same compassion He showed you by living your life in selfless service towards Him and others, trusting that He will provide you with everything you need and more.

But greed for earthly wealth and happiness is so ingrained in our sinful hearts; how do we remove it? The same way you remove air from a cup: by filling it with something else!

Fill your eyes, ears, mind, and heart with the Gospel of Jesus, and the love God has for you in Christ will change you. Not only will you acknowledge that everything you have and are a gift from God, but you will want to use these blessings to God's glory – trusting that He will provide for you far more than you can ever give away.

Yes, the more you bask in Jesus' promises, the less you will worry about the economy, retirement, or how you will spend your money. Why? Because Jesus will be your life and treasure. He will keep His promise to deliver you from every evil on this earth, home to Himself in paradise, where you will experience peace, pleasure, and happiness with God beyond your wildest imaginations.^{vii}

These Gospel promises will chase sinful greed from your heart. You will start understanding the fleeting nature of earthly things and want to use them in the service of Christ instead of self. Why? Because you understand that the LORD defines your life, not your possessions! Your true identity is found in Jesus alone.

Therefore, brothers and sisters in Christ: **Guard yourself against all greed.** Your life is not found in your possessions but in your relationship with Jesus. Live in the joy, peace, and security of knowing that your Saviour will provide all you need for your body and life for His mercy's sake. In the peace of this knowledge, use the physical blessings God has given you to benefit others – understanding that whatever you do for the least of Jesus' brothers, you do for Him.^{viii} Amen.

ⁱ Cf. Luke 12:1-12

ⁱⁱ Cf. John 12:47b

ⁱⁱⁱ Colossian 3:3 EHV

^{iv} „Also gehet es, wer jm Schetze samlet, vnd ist nicht Reich in Gott.“ (Lk. 12:21 Biblia Germanica 1545)

^v Cf. Philippians 2:6-8

vi Cf. Luke 12:22-23, 31

vii Cf. 1 Corinthians 2:9

viii Cf. Matthew 25:40