

## **Simple Needs**

July 31, 2016

### Luke 12: 13-21

<sup>13</sup>A man in a crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, tell my brother to give me my share of what our father left us when he died.” <sup>14</sup>Jesus answered, “Who gave me the right to settle arguments between you and your brother?” <sup>15</sup>Then he said to the crowd, “Don’t be greedy! Owning a lot of things won’t make your life safe.”

<sup>16</sup>So Jesus told them this story: A rich man’s farm produced a big crop, <sup>17</sup>and he said to himself, “What can I do? I don’t have a place large enough to store everything.” <sup>18</sup>Later, he said, “Now I know what I’ll do. I’ll tear down my barns and build bigger ones, where I can store all my grain and other goods.” <sup>19</sup>Then I’ll say to myself, ‘You have stored up enough good things to last for years to come. Live it up! Eat, drink, and enjoy yourself.’” <sup>20</sup>But God said to him, “You fool! Tonight you will die. Then who will get what you have stored up?” <sup>21</sup>“This is what happens to people who store up everything for themselves, but are poor in the sight of God.”



As we come to the end of July, we also draw to the conclusion of our “Simple” series. Today we look at the simple needs of our faith. In a way we have been building up to this concluding message. Over these last four weeks we have looked at several components of our faith. Today we wrestle with perhaps mankind’s greatest challenge to faith: treasures. In today’s parable it centers on wealth, but we can have many different things we place before or above God. Let us pray...

I will not ask you to show hands, but how many of you have ever felt something like the first man in the parable felt? At times we have certainly all felt like we did not get something that we thought we earned or worked for. We all want to be treated fairly, to have what we deserve. So it may have been a shock to this man when Jesus

said, “Don’t be greedy!” I can imagine the man thought, ‘I just want my fair share’. When Jesus continues and tells him that owning lots of things won’t save his life, the man certainly receives a warning against gathering lots of possessions. This line also serves as a foreshadowing of the outcome of the second story that follows.

At times we certainly have all longed for just a little bit more, to get to the place where life would be comfortable, where we could kick back and relax a bit. So to a

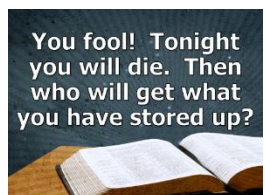


degree we can also relate to the second man, the man who wanted to build bigger barns. After all, God has blessed him with an abundant crop. Isn’t this our first inclination when we come into

something unexpected? Isn’t our first inclination to store it up, to save it? If the story stopped there, almost everyone here today would be okay with the story ending here. Maybe a few would hope he gave a little extra to the church or to the needy. That would indeed be a good and right thing to do, especially when he has so much.

But the man does not follow these paths. Instead, he sees the excess as an opportunity to live an extravagant life. He thinks that once he hoards away all that God has blessed him with, then he can kick back and really live it up. His focus has turned totally inward. All he can see is his own pleasure. The great wealth has consumed the man. God’s response is honest and straight forward:

*“You fool! Tonight you will die. Then who will get what you have stored up?”* In essence, God goes on to tell the man that this is



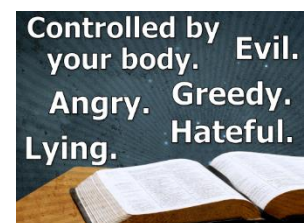
what happens to all people who are selfish and centered only on their own needs.

Jesus says the flip side is to be rich in the things of God instead.

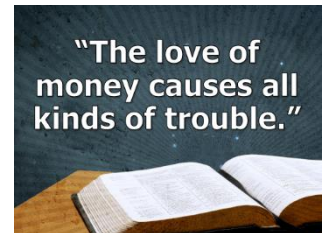


In Colossians 3, we read of God's call on our life. Reading from verses one through four, *"You have been raised to life with Christ. Now set your heart on what is in heaven, where Christ rules at God's right side.* <sup>2</sup> *Think about what is up there, not about what is here on earth.* <sup>3</sup> *You died, which means that your life is hidden with Christ, who sits beside God.* <sup>4</sup> *Christ gives meaning to your life, and when he appears, you will also appear with him in glory."* Once we choose to call on Jesus as our Lord and Savior, then the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in us and we inherit the promise of life eternal. Christ calls us through the Holy Spirit to think of the things of heaven and not of the things of this earth. Paul reminds us that when we enter into a personal relationship with Christ then we find new meaning in our lives. Our purpose and will aligns with God's purpose and will for our life. Instead of our focus becoming inward like the man who built bigger barns, our focus becomes outward. It is the beginning of placing others ahead of self, of living as a servant, of living like Christ lived.

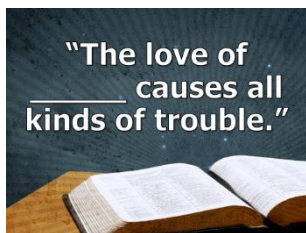
Jesus warned the audience about being greedy with the end results of building bigger barns. Paul also warns us. Reading on in Colossians 3, hear Paul's words: *"Don't be controlled by your body... Don't be greedy, which is the same as worshipping idols...* <sup>8</sup> *But now you must stop doing such things. You must quit being angry, hateful, and evil. You must no longer say insulting or cruel things about others.* <sup>9</sup> *And stop lying to each other. You have given up your old way of life with its habits."* This is quite a list. Perhaps you too can identify a thing or two on this list that you struggle with as well. And there are many more things that could be on the list. Our struggle is real. But once we have claimed Christ as our own, we are called to give up our old way of life with its bad habits and pursuit of treasures and, instead, to live as Christ lived.



This leads us to the question: what does it look like to live as Christ lived? Once we set aside all of these bad habits, we can begin to live a life worthy of Christ. From the man who wanted to build bigger barns, we learn that we cannot choose to serve wealth or our earthly treasures. When wealth or what we own becomes our idol, there is little room left for God. In 1 Timothy 6, we are reminded of this danger. Verses nine through eleven read, *“9 People who want to be rich fall into all sorts of temptations and traps. They are caught by foolish and harmful desires that drag them down and destroy them. 10 The love of money causes all kinds of trouble. Some people want money so much that they have given up their faith and caused themselves a lot of pain.”*



In Luke 16:13, we also hear this similar warning: *“No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”* While I believe the pursuit of wealth is one of those things that can really pulls people away from their faith, I also firmly believe that it is only one of many things. There are a number of things we can



substitute for ‘money’. We could say “the love of beauty causes all kinds of trouble” or “the love of popularity causes all kinds of trouble”. We could as easily say “the love of recognition causes all kinds of trouble” or “the love of power causes all kinds of

trouble”. The list can go on and on and on. There is much we can place above God. When the pursuit of our earthly treasures or idols becomes our focus, we lose focus on God.



Over these past four weeks in the “Simple” series, we have delved into the question of what our faith looks like. Each week we have looked at what it means to live for Christ, in a variety of ways.



We began with the story of the 72 faithful disciples who were sent out in the name of Jesus. They proclaimed the good news and healed the sick. We looked at the story of Naaman and Elisha, who also trusted in the simple power found in faith. All of these experienced amazing things because they had faith in the simple power of God. We too will experience God’s power when we fully trust in His power. The next week we studied the parable of the Good Samaritan. In this parable we see the simple witness to his faith given by the Samaritan. He stopped, he helped the stranger, he loved another in need. We too are called to be a simple witness to our faith through our day to day words and actions, both big and small.

In the third message in this series, we spent some time with Mary and Martha. We saw how easily we too can be consumed by the distractions of this world and how we are called to focus instead on the simple choices of our faith. We are called as disciples to attend to the things of God, to choose like Mary did, to sit at the feet of Jesus. Last week we talked about the simple faith we are called to live. In the story of man needing bread for a friend, we saw how God wants us to be persistent in the pursuit of our faith. If we will ask, we will receive. If we search, we will find. If we knock, the door will be opened to us so that we can receive the good gift of the Holy Spirit.



When we strive to place God first in our lives, we are starting from the right place. When we work to develop trust in God's love and care for us, we are starting to develop a personal relationship with Him. When we dedicate time to pursue God on a daily basis, we deepen our intimate relationship with Him. When we have an intimate relationship with God, we feel compelled to go forth to share the good news with others so that others may come to know the joy that we have.



When we live out the simple power we find in our faith, when we give the simple witness of our faith to others, when we make the simple choice to grow closer to God each day, when we invest in the practices of our simple faith, and when we are content with the simple needs that our faith calls us to live within, then we begin to walk as Jesus walked. God becomes our priority. When we follow these simple things and live by them each day, each day is a step closer to being what we are called to be in this world. As a child of God and as the people of God here in this time and place, through these simple things of our faith, may we ever draw closer to Jesus Christ, our Lord and King. Amen.