

Title: PARABLE OF THE RICH FOOL, LUKE 12:13 – 21.  
(Chatham, NJ; 08/01/10, AM) [S-P, Topical]

Theme: Though the Parable of the Rich Fool addresses the problem of human greed, what it doesn't say is just as important as what it does say.

Purpose: To clarify the biblical teaching on greed and to provide a positive example of one who overcame it by referring to Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*.

Introduction:

1. The Parable of the Rich Fool is prompted by someone asking Jesus to act as an arbiter in the case of a will.
2. The judges and priests heard such cases since they were religious and civil arbiters.
3. However Jesus does not take that role for himself.
4. Furthermore he addresses the root cause of conflicts like this: greed.
5. The story tells of a man who made the wrong investment—think about that.
6. Let's take a journey through the Bible to consider what it says about money and greed.

#### I. What the Bible Says about Greed.

##### A. It's Bad, Bad, Bad.

1. Be careful of all kinds of greed, Luke 12:15.
2. Equated with covetousness, Ex. 20:17, and idolatry, Col. 3:5.
3. It isn't just money that is the object of coveting.
4. Furthermore, the love of money, the desire, 1 Tim. 6:9-10, is the bad thing, not money itself.
5. Ironically the poor are covetous as well as the rich, perhaps more so.
6. Even if "keeping up with the Joneses" doesn't desire the objects owned by the Joneses, it desires to have parity.
7. We want to believe that the inequalities of life should be rectified, so we end up hating and vilifying the rich.

##### B. Godliness with contentment is great gain, 1 Tim. 6:6-8.

1. Contentment is the operative word.
2. Paul learned this in plenty or in want, Phil. 4:11.
3. Paul counsels the rich to give willingly and generously, 1 Tim. 6:17-19, because they are easily tempted to succumb to greed over what they have.
4. He counsels all people to be content because the poor succumb to greed over what others have.
5. Contemporary redistribution schemes are about greed not justice.

#### II. What the Bible Doesn't Say about Greed and Money.

##### A. Everyone must have exactly the same amount.

1. There would be no need for the 10<sup>th</sup> Commandment if this were the case.
2. We must realize that covetousness tempts rich and poor alike: we want what we don't have or more of what we have.
3. The distribution of the bags of gold in the Parable of the Talents is uneven.
4. We might even make the case that if a person has the ability to make money, he would sin by not fulfilling his obligation before God.
5. In addition the Bible never describes how much is too much.

##### B. Take from the rich and give to the poor.

1. The motivation for this idea is jealousy and covetousness.
2. We have already seen that God doesn't create parity in which everyone has exactly the same amount of everything.

3. Even Ananias and Sapphira had the last word as to the disposition of their own property (no apostolic edict commanded them to sell it, and no custom demanded that they give a certain amount of it); their problem was that they lied. Think hypocrisy!
4. Furthermore, remember that Robin Hood took from the government to give back what rightfully belonged to the people. The king's tax policies were confiscatory and kept the people in poverty.

C. No one can own anything.

1. The Bible assumes and protects property rights.
2. Naboth's Vineyard was once again the government exercising confiscatory control over someone's property that was given by divine right.
3. One of the sins decried by the prophets was moving boundary stones to enlarge the size of one's property at the expense of a neighbor.
4. God's law protects property owners.
5. Furthermore, ownership breeds responsibility; what we own we care for more than what we don't.

III. Is There a Parable of the Rich Wise Man?

A. We should hear Jesus' story as an exhortation to use what we have wisely.

1. One man stores up wealth for himself.
2. He dies and leaves it to someone else. (Ecclesiastes says as much.)
3. He stands before God without anything stored in heaven, Mt. 6:19-20.
4. Paul also talks about storing treasure in heaven, 1 Tim. 6:19
5. So we should couch this in terms of making a wise investment.

B. Would the rich wise man look like Scrooge?

1. In Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, we get a glimpse of the possibilities.
2. Scrooge comes to his senses before it is too late.
3. He has already learned the evil of miserly living; now he learns the joy of giving.
4. There are lots of good stories of wealthy people who seek to give back for the good they've received.

Conclusion:

1. We ask ourselves, how can we be rich toward God?
2. How can we store up treasures in heaven?
3. How can we be content with what we have?
4. If we obtain wealth what can we do with it? (To him whom much is given, much is required.)
5. Focus on those who have succeeded in giving, and imitate their lifestyle.
6. Though we haven't gone through the elements of receiving the Gospel today, we have addressed a part of our human condition addressed by the Gospel.
7. The Gospel demands that we be honest with the sin of greed, especially when it is in our own hearts.
8. This is why we are called to repent and be baptized to live a new life.
9. We call you to this today.