

Lesson 156 The Rich Fool/Counting the Cost

I. Scripture Text

Luke 12:13-21 And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. ¹⁴And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? ¹⁵And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. ¹⁶And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: ¹⁷And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? ¹⁸And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. ¹⁹And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. ²⁰But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? ²¹So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

Luke 14:25-33 And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, ²⁶If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. ²⁸For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? ²⁹Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, ³⁰Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. ³¹Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? ³²Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. ³³So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.

II. Bible Story

CG3-1 Warning against covetousness

In Jesus' day, it was the custom that when the father died, the oldest son inherited his father's possessions. One day a young man whose father had died said to Jesus, "Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the

inheritance with me."

Jesus could see this young man's heart and knew that he was very greedy for money. Jesus said to him, "Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?"

Then Jesus said to all of those who were listening, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." In other words, Jesus said, "Beware! Don't always be wanting something you don't have. There is more to life than the things you possess!" Jesus warned about the danger of wanting things more than wanting God.

CG3-2 Rich but poor

To illustrate what He meant, Jesus told a parable about a rich fool. He said that a rich man had fields that yielded such an abundant harvest that the farmer did not have room to store all his grain. "What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?" the rich man asked himself.

After thinking awhile, the rich man decided, "This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry."

Did you notice how many "I's" and "my's" the rich man used in his conversation with himself? What does that tell us? It tells us this rich man was very selfish. He thought only about his own wealth, his own enjoyment, his own material things, such as food for his body and barns for his fruits. He did not think about using his wealth to help the poor around him or about using his wealth for God's work. He supposed he had many more years to live on earth; therefore, he could enjoy his wealth to the fullest. He had no time for God, nor the things of God. A fool is one who leaves God out of his life, for "the fool hath said in his heart, 'There is

no God" (Ps. 14: 1). This rich man planned only for life here on earth; he never thought about life after death, and he made no preparation for eternity. The man was indeed a fool to make no provision for eternity—for life after death.

God said to this rich man, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?"

No matter how rich a person is in material possessions, when he dies, he leaves it all behind. This rich fool was successful in only one way—in material things on earth. He was not successful in God's eyes. He did not possess what really matters, that is, eternal life.

That very night the rich man died. How poor he was as he went into eternity! He was indeed foolish! Everyone who lays up treasures on earth and forgets God is as poor and as foolish as this rich fool. In contrast, the person who is rich in God's eyes lays up treasures in heaven for all eternity. Sometimes Christians act foolishly, too. Though they say they follow Jesus, they live only for things on earth and forget to live for God. Jesus does not want His followers to live only for things on this earth or to be half-hearted in their service to Him, for Jesus was not half-hearted when He went to Calvary for us. God says we must love Him more than anything or anyone else, even more than our own families. We are to take up our cross and follow Jesus if we want to be His disciples. Taking up our cross means that we always put God and His will first in our lives before our own desires and our own plans. It means denying ourselves and doing what God wants. Then a person is very wise and not foolish like the rich fool in the parable.

CG3-3 Can I finish it?

Jesus told two short parables about denying ourselves and counting the cost of following Jesus. Jesus said that any person who builds a tower first figures the cost and decides if he can afford to build the tower. If he fails to do this, he might run out of money after the foundation is laid and never be able to finish the

tower. Then people would laugh at him, saying, "This man began to build, and was not able to finish."

Living the Christian life is somewhat like building a tower. It takes dedication and obedience to Christ. We cannot live the Christian life just any old way; we need to count the cost and be willing to yield our all to God and put Him first in our lives. As we ask Him daily, His powerful Holy Spirit helps us live for God. God will certainly help us live for Him if we ask Him.

In the next parable, Jesus said a king needs to think ahead of time if he goes out to meet an army of 20,000 men coming against him. He needs to figure out first whether he can defeat this great army if he has only half as many soldiers. The answer is probably no! The king should therefore consider this before he goes to meet his enemy, or he may have to send a message of surrender, which could prove to be embarrassing and dangerous for the king.

As Christians, we have Satan and his forces as our great enemy. Therefore, we must carefully consider how we do battle and stand against Satan. In ourselves, we are not sufficient to defeat Satan. We are powerless before Satan. Without God's power, we will surely lose the battle, but with the help of the Lord we can defeat Satan in our lives.

Jesus finished the parables by saying: "So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:33). Does that mean that you cannot be a disciple (follower) of Jesus unless you get rid of your bike, your skateboard, or your new shoes? No, it is not wrong to possess these things, but it is wrong to let them possess you. For example, if you don't go to church because you enjoy your skateboard too much, then you need to learn to forsake your skateboard and put God ahead of your skateboard activities. When anything gets in the way of doing God's will, then it becomes wrong for us. When anything is more important to us than our relationship with God, then it becomes wrong for us.

We are tempted to hold our possessions too tightly. Jesus wants His followers to hold

their possessions in an open hand so God can take them or leave them, as He wills. God wants us to use our possessions to help others and to further His kingdom. He wants us to lay up our treasures, our most prized possessions in heaven.

The story is told of a wealthy Christian woman who dreamed one night that she died and went to heaven. As an angel escorted her down the golden streets of heaven, she saw a beautiful mansion. "is this one mine?" she asked eagerly.

"No," answered the angel, "that one belongs to your gardener." He led her to a much smaller place and said, "This one is yours."

"I don't understand," said the lady who was so wealthy on earth; "Why is mine so much smaller than my gardener's?"

"I'm sorry, lady," said the angel, "but that's all the material you sent up here for us to build with."

When the woman awoke and realized she had been dreaming, she thought about how she had been using her wealth for herself rather than for God's work. So she decided from then on that she would lay up treasures in heaven instead of treasures on earth.

You and I can lay up treasures in heaven and be rich toward God by living for Him and making Him the most important Person in our life. That is the only kind of riches that will last throughout eternity. We cannot take anything to heaven with us when we go, but we can send up a lot before we arrive. Can you think of different ways that we can lay up treasures in heaven?

III. Activity 1

Age 3 through Grade 4

Materials needed:

- ☐ copies of the earthly treasure (\$) and the heavenly treasures (♥) from page 156a
- ☐ stickers as a prize for each student

Cut the treasures apart and hide them around the class room before class. Start the class off with this activity.

Describe the difference between the treasures: the riches of this world represented by

the dollar sign, might be nice to have but we can't take them to heaven; the riches of heaven represented by heart of love are nice to have on earth and we can take it also to heaven.

Tell them that they can all have a prize if they work together to find 25 treasures of love in the room (show them one of each of the treasures). Have them search out the treasures and give them all a prize when they reach the goal.

IV. Activity 2

Grade 5 through Grade 7

Materials needed:

- ☐ a copy of page 156b for each student
- ☐ a blue pen, pencil, or crayon for each student
- ☐ a red pen, pencil, or crayon for each student
- ☐ prize(s), have more than one in case there is a tie.

Read the directions on the bottom of page 156a with the class. Have the students work on their papers in class without any help. Tell them not to look on each other's papers. After they have had a time to work on it, ask them how many words they found.

Next, ask them if any of them looked for the earthly treasures words. Discuss with them why it was a waste of time to bother with the earthly treasures and go straight to the heavenly treasures. Talk with them about how we waste time with the sinful treasures of this world when we should be laying up treasures and rewards in heaven.

Distribute the prizes and assure them that when we go to heaven, we all get prizes according to our work done on earth for God.

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Treasures in Heaven, Treasures on Earth

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| E | S | S | S | M | R | K | E | I | L | N | S |
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| R | G | N | G | A | O | K | N | A | P | A | E |
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| G | I | R | T | L | F | H | Y | M | N | S | T |
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| B | E | A | R | N | I | T | O | N | A | P | M |
| M | O | C | I | G | A | R | E | T | T | E | S |

Can you find the treasures for heaven? With a red pen, pencil, or crayon, circle each word you find that represents a treasure in heaven and give yourself 3 points. With a blue pen, pencil, or crayon, circle each word that represents a treasure on earth and give yourself 0 points. The student with the most points gets a prize. The words for each group are below.

Heavenly treasures: SOULS, HELPS, JESUS, BIBLE, SONGS, PRAYERS, LOVE, FRIENDS, PEACE, JOY, HOPE, REST, HYMNS, GOD

Earthly treasures: DIRT, MONEY, HATE, DRUGS, BEER, GAMBLING, SELF, CIGARETTES, RUST, SIN, LIES, STEALING, MOTH