

Jesus responds to a man with wrong priorities

• *Jesus – and His church – are not here just to make life easier for people*

• *The Christian church has the task of calling men and women to new life by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ*

• *Jesus rebukes the man*

• *Jesus warns the man*

The Rich man was in God's eyes a 'fool'

1. He thought he was intelligent

2. He thought he had foresight

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Jesus is preaching mainly about the Pharisees[☞]. Suddenly a man shouts out from the crowd. 'Tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me,' he calls out. While Jesus is preaching, the man is thinking about a family quarrel in which his brother will not release a share of the family wealth. Jesus is speaking about judgement day and the danger of a sin that is eternally unforgiven, but the man in the crowd is thinking about money! People get the idea that the Christian faith is all about making our earthly life easier.

But Jesus answers bluntly. 'Who appointed me a judge or divider over you?'^{☞1} Jesus – and His church – are not here just to make life easier for people. There are many agencies that do that, but Jesus and His people have a bigger calling. The Christian faith is not just a means to prosperity. The preaching of Jesus was mainly concerned about our relationship to God, the forgiveness of our sins, and the willingness of God to relate to us personally and get His will done in our lives. And the Christian faith has a lot to say about reward in heaven. It is concerned about eternal destiny.

But it is amazing how often the gospel gets misunderstood or corrupted. People think – as this man in Luke 12 did – that the Christian church is simply a social agency to solve the world's problems. 'The church likes religion' – so says the world to itself – 'and it uses religion to make life a little more comfortable for us and to pray for us when we are in trouble! If my brother will not pay me the money I am owed – Jesus is just the person I want. He is a kind of general helper to everybody and will help me get my money.' So says the world! But, of course, this is not the main work of Jesus at all. Jesus comes to tell us of sin and salvation. The Christian church has the task of calling men and women to new life by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So Jesus rebukes the man. 'Who appointed me a judge or divider over you?' 'Who gave me that work?' asks Jesus. 'That is not why I am here at all.'

He goes on to warn the man. 'Take heed of covetousness...'^{☞1} And then He tells the 'parable of the rich fool'.

The rich man prided himself^{☞1} on his intelligence, his success, his efficiency and foresight in doing business. He had plans to ensure his comfort for years to come and was planning a contented retirement for himself. But God calls him a 'fool'^{☞2}.

1. **He thought he was intelligent.** He felt he was a good businessman, cleverly making arrangements for the success of his business. But what is intelligent about not thinking about the unreliability of life?

2. **He thought he had foresight.** There he was planning the future, being very careful to think about everything long before the time, so that he would not suddenly get into difficulties. He was dreaming about a wonderfully successful future in the years ahead. But his thinking about the future only went as far as a few years. He was not thinking about what lay ahead of this life. He was concerned about old age but not about eternity.

3. **He thought he was successful** but what is successful about a man who dies leaving everything? He thought he was covering every possibility but there was one possibility he was not considering – that his life might not be as long as he expected.

☞1 11:37,45; 12:1

☞1 12:14

☞1 12:15

☞1 12:16-19

☞2 12:20

4. He thought he was in command of the situation

5. He was concerned about possessions but not about his relationship to God

Anxiety about money is needless

• Ten points on living for God and His Kingdom - trusting Him for all our needs – without worry

4. He thought he was in command of the situation. He would do this, and he would do that! But he was not as much in control as he thought he was. He could not choose how long his life would last.

5. He was concerned about things and possessions but not about himself and his relationship to God. He was very concerned about material riches but not about spiritual riches^{□1}. He was not 'rich towards God', rich in faith, rich in concern for the needy, rich in spirituality, rich in concern for the kingdom of God.

No wonder God called him a fool. At the height of his success God decided his life had gone on long enough and it was time to call him to account for the way he had lived.

The incident of the man interrupting Jesus leads Jesus on to talk further about money. Anxiety is needless.

- (i) Life is bigger than possessions^{□1}.
- (ii) God will give what is needed without our striving. The ravens are fed without anxiety; the same God who cares for them will feed His people^{□2}.
- (iii) Worry cannot achieve anything^{□3}. Verse 26 (which has no parallel in Matthew ^a) makes the point that since it cannot add the tiniest unit to one's length of life why not simply do what has to be done and leave all the strain to God?
- (iv) God adequately clothes flowers; He will even more clothe His people^{□4}.
- (v) They must be a contrast to godless people^{□5}.
- (vi) They must trust that God knows their needs^{□6} and
- (vii) Must have their attention elsewhere in seeking the kingdom which God is eager to give them^{□7}.
- (viii) They must be generous to others^{□8} and
- (ix) Lay up reward in heaven^{□9}.
- (x) The supreme delight of their life – whether it is money or God's kingdom – will captivate their 'heart'. If money is the delight of their life, their hearts will be earthbound. Let them make God and His kingdom to be their precious treasure^{□10}.

Note

a. For fuller exposition of verses like these in Matthew 6, see Michael Eaton, *The Way That Leads to Life: The Sermon on the Mount* (Christian Focus, 1999), pp. 141–158.

□1 12:21

□1 12:22-23

□2 12:24

□3 12:25

□4 12:27-28

□5 12:29-30a



□6 12:30b

□7 12:31-32

□8 12:33a

□9 12:33b

□10 12:34

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