# Congregational-Presbyterian Church

 **“The Rich Fool”**

**Luke 12:13-21**

 **October 30, 2022**

All of us own things. The question raised by Jesus’ parable this morning is this: to what extent do our things own us? In thinking of who we are and whether our lives make any difference in the world, how much emphasis do we put on our possessions? Is the meaning of life summed up by how much we have, as pithily expressed by the phrase, “He who dies with the most toys wins”? For the biblical answer to these and similar questions, I invite you to turn with me to Luke 12:13-21

Then someone called from the crowd, “Teacher, please tell my brother to divide our father’s estate with me.” Jesus replied, “Friend, who made me a judge over you to decide such things as that?” Then he said, “Beware! Guard against every kind of greed. Life is not measured by how much you own.” Then he told them a story: “A rich man had a fertile farm that produced fine crops. He said to himself, ‘What should I do? I don’t have room for all my crops.’ Then he said, ‘I know! I’ll tear down my barns and build bigger ones. Then I’ll have room enough to store all my wheat and other goods. And I’ll sit back and say to myself, “My friend, you have enough stored away for years to come. Now take it easy! Eat, drink, and be merry!”’ But God said to him, ‘You fool! You will die this very night. Then who will get everything you worked for?’ Yes, a person is a fool to store up earthly wealth but not have a rich relationship with God.”

Jesus chooses to bypass the immediate problem of the inheritance and zeros in on a deeper problem in the hearts of both brothers, as well as in the hearts of many in the crowd. “Guard against every kind of greed.” To teach us the dangers of greed, Jesus tells a story in which a rich man’s fields produced such an abundance of crops that he didn’t have room to store them. So far, so good. There is nothing wrong with being wealthy, as this man was, nor is there anything wrong with experiencing an abundance. Where the man begins to go wrong is what he does next. “He said to himself, ‘“What should I do?’”

His foolishness begins when he decides not to turn to God, nor to others who God may have placed in his life, to help him decide what to do with his abundance. He is fulfilling one of the proverbs of the Bible: “The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’” Applied to this situation, the fool says in his heart that there is no God to whom he should turn and learn how to deal with his riches. Next, he reveals the greedy attitude of his heart in his conversation with himself, a conversation littered with “I” and “my” statements. These riches belong to him, and only he should decide what to do with them. In fact, these riches exist to serve him, allowing him to take it easy and to “eat, drink, and be merry.”

If only he had turned to the Word of God, he would have read in the book of Deuteronomy: “Never say to yourself, ‘I have achieved this wealth with my own strength and energy.’ Remember the Lord your God. He is the one who gives you power to be successful.” Instead of being a fool, he would have begun to be wise toward God in the use of his riches. His riches, including this latest bumper crop, were a result of God’s blessing. Who created the ground from which the crops grew? Who supplied the sun and the rain necessary for their growth? Who created human beings in such a way that they are able to harvest the crop? “Remember the Lord your God!” He did not remember the Lord his God; he thought only of himself, saw only himself as responsible for his success, saw only himself as worthy of deciding what to do with his riches, and saw only himself as the beneficiary of those riches.

In the midst of his abundance he went blind and deaf to the great giver of all good things. But the great giver of all good things was not blind to his greed. Thinking he had control of his own life, God was about to show him who is actually in control. God had no problem with the man being rich; after all it was God who had provided those riches. What God has a problem with is when our greed causes us to store up the earthly wealth he has provided with no consideration for how he would have us use that wealth.

Notice that Jesus gives no formula in his parable for what the man should have done with his wealth, no “one size fits all” teaching on how each Christian can determine exactly how much of their wealth to give to God’s kingdom. The truth being taught in his parable is summarized at the end: “have a rich relationship with God.” Spend time in prayer, in Scripture and in fellowship with the people of God, and be aware of the needs of that fellowship which we call the church. Then you will be living a rich relationship with God. In turn, that rich relationship will guide you to identify the particulars of how God would have you share what God has given you. I close with one last challenge from the Word of God, this time from the Psalms: “What can I offer the Lord for all he has done for me?”