

Text— Luke 12:13-21

Fellow redeemed sinners, redeemed by the blood of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ,

It's no secret that our country is going through a period of skyrocketing costs to consumers, as we see food and fuel prices regularly increasing, setting record highs. Hence, we sinful human beings are inclined to worry about such things which face us day in and day out, "For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." — declares Ecclesiastes 7:20.

Oh beloved, in honesty, we Christians must all admit, as did the apostle Paul, Romans 7:18-19, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do."

We forget that David, the sweet psalmist of Israel, wrote by inspiration of God, in Psalm 37, "Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked. I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." (Psalm 37:3, 16, 25)

Therefore, we Christians must be on guard against shifting our priorities from vital spiritual and eternal needs to temporal things, for our Lord Jesus says in the sixth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take

thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." (Matthew 6:24, 31-34) Accordingly, we must beware of worrying about worldly things; we must remain focused on the things of God— God's kingdom and the righteousness He has provided us in Christ.

Hence, our Scripture selection can be of help to us in keeping a God-pleasing mind-set with proper priorities, as it warns:

"BEWARE OF COVETOUSNESS"

With that as our theme, may we, in view of our text and with the help of the Holy Ghost, see—

- 1) What type of covetousness we are to beware of
- 2) Why we must beware of covetousness

-1-

Verse 13, ----- (Luke 12:13)

Jesus was with His disciples; and, a multitude of people surrounded them. Jesus was speaking to His disciples about important spiritual matters, for He told them, as we read in Luke 12:1, "Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." You see, the Pharisees made a big show of sanctimoniousness with their long robes and public praying to be seen of men; and yet, it was an act: nothing but hypocrisy. Jesus then spoke of the necessity of having sincere faith in Him, for we read in Luke 12:8-9 that Jesus plainly declared, "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God: But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God." Nevertheless, while Jesus was instructing folks regarding important spiritual and eternal needs, *one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.*

Can you imagine it? This guy in the crowd pipes-up, rightly addressing Jesus as Master, but then asks Him to intervene in an earthly matter concerning an inheritance of money and/or goods. The man's

mind and heart were obviously focused on temporal things, earthly things.

Verse 14, ----- (Luke 12:14)

Jesus was undoubtedly a bit irked by the man's request, for Jesus *said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?*

Think about Jesus' response to the man's request. Jesus made it clear that it was NOT His office to handle matters of civil authority! Jesus was a preacher and teacher of God's Word. Jesus came, "to seek and to save that which was lost." — as Luke 19:10 relates. Jesus is the only Savior of sinners, for Acts 4:12 states, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Jesus did not come to earth to arbitrate in civil matters.

Oh, when the Last Day comes, Jesus will be Judge, but NOT in mere civil matters, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." — declares 2 Corinthians 5:10. Indeed, on the great Last Day, Jesus will judge ALL people.

Verse 15, ----- (Luke 12:15)

Notice that after Jesus answered the man directly, He then spoke to ALL the people present, for our text says: *And he said unto them (plural), Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.*

Observe that the covetousness we all need to beware of is COVETING the THINGS OF THIS WORLD— money, possessions and property of another, living and non-living things. It's as God commands in Exodus 20:17, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's."

There is a type of coveting that is NOT forbidden, for we read in 1 Corinthians 12:28-31, "God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way." Thus, we may earnestly desire SPIRITUAL gifts from God— such is the only type of coveting that is not sinful.

Let us beware of all sinful coveting, that is, the desire for worldly wealth, riches, titles, power; the desire for those earthly things which belong to another.

-2-

As we ponder our sermon text to its conclusion, let us see why we must beware of covetousness.

Again, verse 15, ----- (Luke 12:15)

The first reason our text supplies us as to why we must beware of covetousness, is that Jesus Christ **COMMANDS** us, saying, *Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.*

Jesus Christ our Savior is also our LORD! Therefore, we owe Jesus obedience. Furthermore, in John 14:23-24, Jesus says, "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me." Let us therefore strive to obey Jesus' command to beware of covetousness, to beware of coveting worldly things. Let us show we love the Lord Jesus by obeying Him.

Verses 16-18, ----- (Luke 12:16-18)

Jesus entered upon an illustrative story to teach spiritual truths, for *he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And 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.*

Accordingly, it was a bumper-crop year for a certain rich land-owner. The man's farm really produced a huge harvest— so large that the rich man was inclined to tear down the old barns and build huge storage buildings. The rich dude figured he would store up all the fruits and goods his land had produced. Why, it had been such a prosperous growing season that the cost of the new buildings was as nothing to that rich man, for he had grown even richer in worldly wealth.

Verse 19, ----- (Luke 12:19)

Observe the rich man's mind-set, for after experiencing a super abundant crop and planning to store it up in new big buildings, he thought: *I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.*

Yeah, the rich dude planned to kick back, take it easy, cease from work, and party big-time while being merry.

Notice with the rich man there was no thought given to thanking God for the abundant blessings; nor was there any thought about giving a gift to the temple or church for the furtherance of God's Word; nor was there any thought about helping the poor and needy. No, the rich man was selfish and self-centered; the rich man was focused only on the things of this world and having good times in this temporal life. The rich man gave no thought to the much more important spiritual needs and matters!

Is not the rich man in our text representative of the attitude of the majority of folks in our present

world? Is not our own sinful flesh tempted to think as did the rich man in our text? Sure! That's why 1 John 2:15-17 instructs and declares, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." Hence, we need to fight against the devil, the world and our own sinful flesh.

The rich man in our text did NOT value the Lord and His will as revealed in His Word. The rich man did NOT fight against the devil, the world and his own sinful flesh; and, it cost him, as we shall see as we proceed with our text.

Verses 20 & 21, ----- (Luke 12:20-21)

Ah, after beholding his bumper-crop and planning to erect huge storage buildings, the rich man had said, *I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.* But what happened? *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?* And so, Jesus concludes by saying, *So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.*

Think about the lesson Jesus is teaching by the parable of the rich man: BEWARE OF COVETOUSNESS! Beware of coveting worldly wealth and possessions, because you cannot take such things with you when you die.

My friends, it is very foolish to set one's heart on worldly wealth, on money and property and possessions, for all such things pass away. On the other hand, we human beings all have an immortal soul! Thus, we ALL need Jesus Christ, because, as we read in Romans 3:23 and 6:23, "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; [and] the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Yes, Jesus

Christ, God's only begotten Son, is the only Way to God and heaven, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." (John 3:16-18) Accordingly, our hearts need to be set on Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and Lord!

You, me and all other people need to realize, "we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." (Romans 14:10-12) "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." (John 3:36) Yes, it's as we read in Romans 10:9-11, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." Indeed, the shame of never-ending damnation in hell will NOT be had by any of those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, we need to be rich toward God by having faith, by valuing our spiritual needs far more than temporal things.

And how is it that we can properly focus on the important things of God rather than worldly things? Holy Writ answers in Galatians 5:16-17 and Romans 8:13-17, "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are

led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."

Thus, it's true that we need to walk in the Holy Spirit; for, we read in Romans 8:9, "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." And, we can only walk in the Holy Spirit by continuing in the Lord's Word, for Jesus says in John 8:31-32, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

It's as Galatians 4:4-7 tells us Christians, "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." Indeed, fellow Christians, we are God's adopted children, the Holy Spirit of Christ dwelling in our hearts.

Accordingly, let us show we love the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior by holding fast to Him and His Word, which includes heeding His warning to beware of covetousness.

Let us daily and sincerely repent of our sins; let us keep our full trust and confidence in Christ Jesus as our personal Savior and Lord; and, let us fight against our sinful flesh, the devil and the wicked world, all of which urge us to covet the things of this world. God grant it for Jesus' sake. Amen.

m.e.l.