

BIBLE STUDIES

“Men From The Past With A Message For The Present”**“MR. BIG BARN BUILDER: THE FOOLISH FARMER”**

Luke 12:16-21

“Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: ‘The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’ So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.’” But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’ “So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

A man was seriously ill. He told his wife to sell all stocks and bonds, empty all bank accounts and divide the proceeds evenly between the two of them. He instructed his wife to put his half in suitcases and place them in the attic of the house. He said, “When I die I’ll get the money on the way up.” He died and after the funeral the wife went up into the attic and the money was there still packed in the suitcases. She said, “Just as I thought, I should have put it in the basement!”

The use or misuse of money is a spiritual indicator. It can indicate which direction we are headed after we die! The story Jesus told about the farmer in Luke 12 reveals the farmer’s wrong thinking about possessions. The Big Barn Builder philosophy is not exclusive to farmers. Many are those who approach work and the acquisition of possessions just like he did.

The emphasis of society in general seems to be expressed in the lines from a commercial which says in essence: “Grab all the gusto you can for we only go around one time!” Grabbing with gusto characterizes a large segment of our society, be they law-abiders as well as law-breakers.

Jesus told the story about the foolish farmer because two brothers were fussing over finances: *“Then one from the crowd said to Him, ‘Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.’ But He said to him, ‘Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?’ And He said to them, ‘Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.”* (Luke 12:13-15)

The fellow who wanted Jesus to settle the argument between him and his brother led to Jesus telling the Big Barn Builder Story as a warning to all. If we heed the warning we will not make the same mistakes that the foolish farmer made. Notice ten mistakes that the farmer made:

1. THE MISTAKE OF CLAIMING OWNERSHIP RATHER THAN STEWARDSHIP.

He said, *“I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods....”*

Jesus tells about a servant who was called before his master and was told to *“Give an*

account of your stewardship.” (Luke 16:2) That is what God will demand from all of us. The Foolish Farmer took the position of an owner and not a steward. A “steward” is “one to whom something has been entrusted and for which an account must be given.”

Psalm 24:1 reminds us that *“the earth is the Lord’s and everything in it.”* And James writes, *“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights.”* (James 1:17) Our Heavenly Father Who gives us sunlight from heaven gives us every good gift for He is the owner, not we ourselves. The Foolish Farmer thought that he was the sole source of all his earthly goods. When he harvested a great crop, instead of thanking God for it, he hoarded it and coveted more.

Paul’s admonition to Timothy certainly applies to this farmer and to us as well: *“Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.”* (1 Tim.6:17)

David had the correct view of the benefits he enjoyed and said, *“Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits Who satisfies your mouth with good things...”* (Psalm 103:2,5) That which the Lord provides for us, we must utilize in the proper manner, and give back to Him an account of our stewardship.

2. THE MISTAKE OF BEING A SELF-CENTERED PERSON.

“And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’ So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul.....”

This man used the personal pronoun “my” five times and “I” six times. You would gather from what he said that he did all the work on the farm himself. A person with such vast real estate holdings as he appeared to have and such a large farming enterprise to require multiple barns, would also have many employees and even family members involved in the business. But to hear him talk about it, he did it all himself!

Warren W. Wiersbe writes of this man: “This farmer saw his wealth as an opportunity to please himself. He had no thoughts of others or of God.” He certainly seems to be ego-centric. He had built his world upon himself and that is always a bad foundation. He must have been a very lonely man who appears to have lived for and to himself alone. What a sad lifestyle for anyone.

3. THE MISTAKE OF CONFUSING HIS BODY WITH HIS SOUL.

“And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years...”

Sometimes it is well for us to talk to ourselves but when we do, we should make sure that

we are telling ourselves the truth! This man needed to differentiate between his mortal body and his immortal soul. The things of the world will not satisfy the needs of a soul. The tangible cannot satisfy the intangible. This is pure Epicureanism. An epicurean is one who is given over to sensual pleasures especially of eating and drinking. He is overwhelmed with success. Could we say that success went to his head? He is thinking only about earthly life, not the after life. This type of person lives to satisfy sensual appetites forget that they have an intellect to be cultivated, a heart to be purified, a soul to be saved!

4. THE MISTAKE OF THINKING HE COULD CONTROL HIS FUTURE.

“..... you have many goods laid up for many years....”

No one can boast of tomorrow, or knows what will happen tomorrow or if there will be a tomorrow on earth! James reminds us: *“Now listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.” Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.” As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil.”* (James 4:13-16)

Many goods for many years is the goal of most persons. They are working for *“many goods”* and planning on living for *“many years.”* While work is God’s decree for the human race: *“Six days you shall labor and do all your work”* (Ex.20:9) and, while there is nothing wrong with taking care of one’s health and hoping to live to a ripe old age, yet to focus only upon life on earth with no thought for eternity is why this farmer was foolish!

5. THE MISTAKE OF THINKING THAT “THINGS” COULD SATISFY HIS SOUL.

The intangible soul cannot be satisfied with tangible assets. The devil tried to tempt Jesus with “things” in the temptation in the wilderness. Matthew chapter four records the following: *“Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, “All these **things** I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.” Then Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.’”* (Matt.4:8-10)

Francis Schaeffer wrote that the majority of people had adopted two impoverished values: *personal peace* and *affluence*. *“Affluence means an overwhelming and ever-increasing prosperity--a life made up of things, things, and more things--a success judged by an ever-higher level of material abundance.”*

Harvard Business Review for February 24, 2010, had a very interesting article by Umair Haque on *“The Real Roots of The Current Economic Crisis.”* The article underscores what Francis Schaeffer wrote years ago. Haque wrote, *“We were chasing stuff. The real crisis is a crisis of nihilism: the belief that apart from stuff, nothing else matters economically. In the name of stuff, we sacrificed what mattered: people, community, comity, trust, education, skill, quality, happiness — and tomorrow itself. The real crisis is inside us. It’s how we make sense of the world, what motivates us, and in what we value.*

It was the American way of life that ate America. And America's real bankruptcy is a bankruptcy of the soul."

Jesus asked, "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark 8:36,37) Those two questions have yet to be answered satisfactorily. How would you answer them?

6. THE MISTAKE OF FOLLOWING THE WRONG PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE.

The Foolish Farmer said, "take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry."

Everyone needs rest and relaxation who has earned it. After six days of creative work, even though the Almighty One does not tire, He rested. ("Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, The Creator of the ends of the earth, Neither faints nor is weary." Isa. 40:28)

The message God sent in the beginning is that it is right and proper to rest after labor. However, nowhere in the Bible does God countenance a life of hedonistic luxurious leisure. ("Hedonism" = "the teaching that pleasure or happiness is the sole or chief good in life." – Merriam-Webster Dictionary.) Not to be confused necessarily with "heathenism." ("Heathenism" = "an unconverted member of a people or nation that does not acknowledge the God of the Bible; an uncivilized or irreligious person." Ibid)

The Foolish Farmer and the prodigal son had the same philosophy until the son ended up with the pigs. It was there that he "came to himself" and went back home. One, the prodigal son, was down and out; the other, the Foolish Farmer, was up and out. In each case, both of them were "out." If you follow this same philosophy you too will be out!

7. THE MISTAKE OF LEAVING GOD OUT OF HIS PLANS.

"But God said to him, 'Fool!'"

Nowhere in this parable, (a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning) did Jesus indicate that this man ever recognized God's existence. He "thought within himself" Jesus said. He who consults only with himself has a fool for a counselor. The Proverb writer said, "Without counsel, plans go awry, But in the multitude of counselors they are established." (Prov. 15:22)

Have you sought counsel lately from The Counselor? Isaiah says Jehovah Jesus is the "Wonderful Counselor." (Isa. 9:6) The best laid plans of mice and men go astray, but God's plans always come to fruition. Because the Big Barn Builder left God out of his calculations, God confronted him and pronounced this man's epitaph: "Fool!" God always has the last word!

8. THE MISTAKE OF NOT PREPARING TO MEET GOD.

"This night your soul will be required of you....."

This man had made lavish preparations to live, but he had not prepared for death. No one is prepared to live unless and until he is prepared to die. The prophet Amos put it bluntly when he wrote, "Prepare to meet your God." (Amos 4:12)

Sometime out there in the future of every person is an unavoidable, an inescapable appointment. The writer of Hebrews records these sobering words: *"It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment."* (Heb.9:27) Every cemetery in existence testifies to the truth of that statement. The Foolish Farmer is buried somewhere in one of those cemeteries!

9. THE MISTAKE OF FAILING TO CONSIDER THE ELUSIVENESS OF POSSESSIONS.

"then whose will those things be which you have provided?"

God asked him, "Who will receive your barns and the bounty that you have accumulated?" He thought that he had it made – he did! For someone else! Someone asked a fellow whose friend had recently died, "How much did he leave?" The friend answered, "He left it all!" You have never seen a U-Haul Trailer behind a hearse. An aged saintly soul said to a boy, "Son, to make it through life you have to really hold on. Hold to things lightly; hold to truth rightly; hold to God tightly!" That man was a farmer also but a wise one.

10. THE MISTAKE OF BEING RICH TOWARD SELF BUT POOR TOWARD GOD.

"So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

This man had much laid aside for himself on earth, but had nothing laid up in heaven. He was prosperous on earth but poverty stricken in eternity.

A man and his wife were standing holding each other while they watched as the final flames devoured the last remnants of their home. The husband said forlornly, "There goes everything that we have." The wife, with tears freely flowing smiled up at him and said, "No, honey, everything that we have given to the Lord over the years is safe in heaven. Now we have more there than we have here on earth."

All of us would do well to concentrate upon sending more on ahead *"where thieves do not break through and steal"* and where fire does not consume!

SUMMATION

Jesus was not condemning possessions as such; He was rather condemning the wrong attitude toward them: the attitude that they are the most important things in life. Jesus words, immediately preceding the story about the Foolish Farmer, were these: *"Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses."* (Luke 12:15) Not a few persons imagine that *worth* in life is measured by *wealth* in life.

Anyone who reads Jesus' parable must agree that the designation that Jesus gave the man was correct: "Fool!" Jim Elliot, martyred missionary wrote, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose."

CONCLUSION

Jesus is not finished with the story! At the end of the parable about the Foolish Farmer He delivered His punch-line:

“Then He said to His disciples, “Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on. Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing. Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds? And which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? If you then are not able to do the least, why are you anxious for the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith? “And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things. But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you.” (Luke 12:22-29)

There Is A Legitimate Question That Must Be Answered!

It is this: “Am I not to have anything? There is a three-part answer to that very reasonable question:

- **Be a Grower – Grow all you can grow!**
- **Be a Gatherer – Gather all you can gather!**
- **Be a Giver – Give all you can Give!**

That is the balance that the Bible teaches. Disciples of Jesus must distance themselves from the attitude of the world which focuses only upon the present life and its possessions. We must remember that: **The end is coming!** If we live with eternity in view we will not make the same mistakes that the Foolish Farmer made.

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