

THE MAN GOD CALLED A FOOL

Luke 12:16-21

At the time Christ spoke this parable to His disciples in the midst of an enormous crowd in the open air, two great sins were prevalent among the Jewish people. They were hypocrisy and covetousness. These two sins are quite prevalent in the lives of present-day church members, and that makes the parable relevant and applicable.

This parable enables us to listen to a man talking to himself. People who talk to themselves are very apt to provide amusement for others, but sometimes they evoke their pity. If, however, the talking has to do with the affairs of the soul, it can be a very wholesome exercise. From listening to the man whom Christ described in the parable, we learn what he thought of himself and his program. Unwittingly he indicated the size and nature of the world in which he lived, his aims and his aspirations, and he revealed clearly his spiritual condition. He had made out the wrong program for his life, and fully intended to carry it out.

There are multitudes all about us of whom this man is a type. He represents all who put self — selfish interests and selfish enjoyments — before the will of God and the service of others. We are somewhat surprised and shocked that God called this man a fool. He did so because no other term was so descriptive and appropriate. Although our Lord forbids us to apply this harsh and jarring word to others, it is permissible for us to use it in each case where He has applied it.

The man portrayed in this parable was a farmer. Farming is one of the most ancient and satisfying professions or callings. The farmer plows the ground and buries his seed with faith that life in the seed will burst forth, that it will be a good season, and that he will gather a splendid harvest. On the farm one is close to nature. Nothing is more grand than such things as the feel of new plowed soil, the blossoms of the trees, the call of the quail, the fragrance of new-mown hay, and the clean, fresh air about you.

To be a successful farmer one has to do a lot of hard work, so we know that this man was not lazy. He was capable, respectable, upright, industrious, enterprising, thrifty, frugal, honest, and wealthy. Nothing unfair, dishonest, extortionate or oppressive was alleged against him. Christ did not mention a flaw in his moral character or find any fault with his business methods. He had not made his money by speculation or fraud, but by honest and thorough cultivation of his fertile fields. As a result of his ability, industry and diligence, plus the blessings of God in the form of sunshine and showers, his ground brought forth plentifully. There wasn't anything wrong about that. There is no harm in having wonderful crops. Good crops are an evidence of painstaking industry, good management, and God's blessings. It is neither a sin to be prosperous, nor a virtue to be poor. Rags can result from laziness as easily and surely as riches can be the product of dishonesty and fraud. God did not censure or condemn the farmer for being diligent and having a good harvest. God is not a champion of failure. It is a fallacy to think that a man is dishonest or wrong because he has plenty.

This farmer was interested in saving what he made. Christ did not censure him for that. Our Lord never put a premium on wastefulness. Both by precept and example He taught us that to waste anything of value is both foolish and sinful. That is still true, regardless of where and by whom it is done. After Christ had fed the multitudes, He commanded the disciples to gather up the fragments in order that nothing be wasted.

I. The Fancies Of This Man.

1. He fancied that life was for accumulation.

There was a materialistic spirit in his day, and that same spirit is certainly prevalent today. This farmer knew how to select soil and seed, and how to take advantage of

sunshine and showers, and in due time his barns were filled to overflowing. There wasn't anything wrong in producing all that he could. His sin was in spending his time and centering his undivided attention on things, and not looking beyond them. To him life consisted in things instead of high and holy purposes. He valued his days by the money he could make in them. The desire to increase his holdings became his all-consuming ambition. What a tragedy for any man to fancy that life is just to get!

2. He fancied that he was to keep what he accumulated and enjoy it himself.

He had two aims — getting and keeping. Because he was selfish, he wanted to keep everything that came into his possession. His greatest ambition was to make a lot of money and be able to take life easy. How much better it would have been if he had become a partner with God, turned his craps into money, and shared it with others. Instead, he never thought about God or about others.

Mr. and Mrs. John G. Hardin of Burkburnett, Texas, gave five million dollars in round numbers to Texas Baptist institutions while they were yet alive. One day Mr. Hardin was a guest of Dr. J. C. Hardy, then president of Mary Hardin-Baylor College. At the chapel hour, the president had Mr. Hardin stand at the front. By him was a young woman who knew the names of all the girls. The entire student body marched by and shook hands with the benefactor of that institution. When all had passed by, with tears in his eyes, the dear old man said, "I am made happy as I think of the fact that I have some little part in the life of every one of these young women." How different was his estate from that of the rich fool!

3. He fancied that he could make his life a thing of ease.

Is that life? If so, who wants it? He had plenty of possessions, but he could not find any higher enjoyment than eating and drinking. Poor indeed is the person who is reduced to mere animal satisfaction for happiness. In all ages all good and great men have felt an acute need of some challenging and worthy task. Surely this troubled, confused, and sinful age in which we live is not a time for easy living.

4. He fancied that he had more time than he did.

He thought that he had many more years to live, but in reality he did not have a single day. That very night he was to depart from the scene of action, and leave everything behind. Today many are going on in the belief that they have many years left, but in reality they will be called away soon.

5. He fancied that he was a great success.

But was he? No! He made a fortune, but he missed the purpose of life. He called himself a success, but God called him a fool. He gave his thought, time, and energies to this life only. Anybody who does that is foolish and will be a colossal failure.

II. The Follies Of This Man.

1. He did not prepare for life.

His folly is seen in his failure to put first things first. He put property above purpose, cash above character, wealth above wisdom, and accumulations above acceptance of the Lord. He thought that life was measured by possessions.

We live in a world in which money is the usual standard of success. That is, the more money a man makes or has, the more successful he is considered to be. Far too often the key question that determines a person's standing in the community is "What is he worth?" And yet Christ said, "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the

things which he possesseth." Even though some try to measure people by the dollar mark, it cannot be done.

This farmer's bumper crop created a problem for him. He thought and worried about what he was going to do with the surplus. He wanted more and more, simply for the love of having more. The covetous spirit indicates how foolish one is regardless of the amount of money he has. Covetousness warps the judgment, perverts the normal interests of life, distorts the perspective, weakens the character, and stunts the soul. In spite of one's best intentions covetousness will ruin his life.

It is possible for one to know how to make a living and not know how to make a life. A man may know a lot about one thing and know nothing about other things. A man may know a great deal about engineering, and nothing about medicine.

This farmer did not prepare to live because he was concerned only with material things. No man prepares to live who leaves God out of his life. Our modern civilization does not realize that God is an essential part of human life. Man was made for God and he will never have peace and happiness until he becomes a child of God. A human being needs God like the lungs need oxygen and like fish need the water.

Life is not made up of material things alone. Money can never take the place of God. Money does not console in the hour of distress. Money does not dry the tears of the bereaved and brokenhearted. This man did not have money; money had him. He learned that material things can never satisfy a spiritual need. Anybody who turns to goods will be disappointed, but all who turn to God will be satisfied. Peace, contentment, and happiness are to be found in God alone. Let your purpose be what it may, and live as you will, but you will find out that if you leave God out of your life you have played the fool. He who lives without God will perish.

2. He did not prepare for death.

He lived as if he were never going to die. Seemingly he never gave a thought to the daily possibility of death. His only concern was to score a victory in the material realm. Having many barns and abundant crops, he thought that he owned life also. Even though he thought he had many years ahead, he actually had just a few hours for God said to him: "Fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." While making his plans, he was on the very brink of the grave. He didn't have any time for God in his life, but he took time for the grave. Death is a fact that only a fool will disregard. "This night" may be nearer to you than you think. Are you prepared to die? If death should come to you, before the sun shall rise in the morning, would you be ready? Nobody is prepared to die who is not also prepared to live. Nobody is prepared to live or to die who has not received Christ as his personal Saviour. Death is just around the corner for most of us. More of us will die with our clothes on than will die in bed. At its best life is very brief. Are you prepared for death? It is extremely foolish not to be ready for it, for nothing is more certain than death.

3. He did not prepare for eternity.

In his program there was no place for thoughts of eternity. "Many years" limited the range of his outlook. He lived as if there were no heaven, no hell, or no eternity. He was a fool because he failed to make preparation for life, for death, and for eternity. A man can be wise in preparing for the possible, but he is a fool to fail to prepare for the certain. All are foolish who follow the example of this farmer who did not prepare for life, for death, or for eternity.

Don't play the fool with your life and your destiny. If you are wise enough to carry insurance on that which is perishable, don't be foolish enough to go without security for that which is eternal. If you are wise enough to insure your house, your furniture, your car, and your life, then why not be wise enough to insure your soul? If you are wise enough to have your property titles recorded and kept, don't be foolish enough to live and to die without a title to a home in heaven. If you are sensible enough to select and purchase a resting place for your body in a cemetery, don't be foolish enough to neglect to secure a resting place for your soul. You can be prepared for life, for death, and for eternity by receiving Christ as your Saviour and enthroning Him as the Lord of your life. I urge you to do that now as we sing our song of invitation.