

Dear Fellow Redeemed by the blood of God's own Son,

Years ago I read about a tribe in Africa that hired a new king every seven years, and killed the previous ruler. The king lived in luxury and absolute power for **seven years**, then he was killed! Everyone knew that the king would be put to death. **But there were always many people who wanted to be king!** Some may say, "*What more can you expect from ignorant savages!*" Yet, in our country millions make the same choice every day. They go after the **things** of this earth as if they were gathering **life** itself. We find two such persons in our text. In presenting the brother and the foolish rich man, our Lord reminds us that

### WHERE OUR TREASURE IS, THERE IS OUR HEART.

#### I.

The covetous desires of a brother led Jesus to warn His disciples in v. 15: "**Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.**" It is important to know what Jesus mean by "life" in this verse?

The original Greek has one word to speak of a man's "**aliveness**," and a different word to speak of his "**living**." V.15 has the Greek word for a person's "**aliveness**." Jesus says that a man's **aliveness** or "**breath of life**," does not depend upon the gathering of this world's things for the comfortable **living** of the body.

**The parable of the rich man** shows the foolishness of a person who confuses his **actual life** or "**aliveness**" with the **living** of his body. The rich man had received such great abundance from his labors, that he decided to build greater storehouses for his wealth. He **lived** for the day he could retire and his body could **live** comfortably.

At this point we should not be thinking that this rich man is **far from us**. Our Lord told this parable to His "**disciples**," in order to warn us all not to **confuse** our **actual life** with the "**living**" of our bodies. In a materialistic society such as ours, many people do not only **eat to live; they live to eat!** They sit down with the rich man and plan for the day when they will be able to eat, drink, and be merry, **because of the goods they have laid up**. The earlier the retirement, the better!

Surely we see the foolishness of the rich man who says to himself: "**Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.**" Do you see this man's confusion? He speaks of his abundance of material goods as if **they** will secure the long life of his **soul!** But our **souls**, our "**aliveness**," does not benefit at all by all that we may gather for the comfortable **life of our bodies!**

Even as the rich man was counting on having many easy **tomorrows**, because of the **things** he had gathered, God sentenced him from heaven: "**Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?**" *The abundance of my possessions did not bring me the **breath of life** in my mother's **womb**. Nor can they preserve my **aliveness** as I march to the **tomb!***

#### II.

It is not only foolish, but **fatal** to lay up treasures for one's self and to be "**poor in regard to God.**" This is shown first of all by the brother who was **worried** about his inheritance. He was so worried, that he interrupted Jesus' message about **real** life: "**Teacher,**" he blurted, "**tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.**"

But Jesus did not come to be a judge in legal matters. He had come so that people "**might have life . . . more abundantly.**" He offered Himself as "**The Bread of life,**" and as "**living water**" to sinners whose **souls** hungered and thirsted for eternal life! Because of this man's preoccupation with laying up treasure for himself, **he had no real interest in the heavenly treasure Jesus offered.**

This man was not a freak! Why do you think the modern **prosperity** preachers have such a huge following? Because they tell people what they want to hear: "**God wants you to prosper and become rich!**" Those who believe that God **wants** to make them **rich**, are **not rich in God!** They are not preserving life, but **flirting** with the eternal death of their souls! Remember the end of the foolish rich man!

Jesus says: "**Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.**" (Lk. 12:34) Again: "**No one 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. You cannot serve God and riches.**" (Mt. 6:24)

Did the rich man's heart belong to God? **Not at all!** He did find his real wealth in **his Savior!** Notice that while considering what he should do with **all** his earthly goods, he uses the pronouns "**I**" and "**My**" **no less than eleven times!** There is **no reference to God** – no thanksgiving and no thought of serving anyone but himself with his wealth! His zeal for riches was **fatal** to his **soul**, for God said to him: "**You fool, this night your soul shall be required of you.**"

The Christian's soul will **not** be "**required of**" him in his death or on the Last Day, for he is "**rich in God.**" He has committed his "**aliveness**" or **soul** to his heavenly Father. The Christian **looks forward** to the day when his **soul** leaves his mortal body to receive eternal riches in heaven, where "**moth does not corrupt and thieves do not break in and steal.**"

**How foolish and fatal** to lay up treasure in a world we are hastening **FROM**, while taking little thought of laying up treasure in the world we are hastening **TOWARD!** "**For what is a man profited if he shall gain even the whole world and lose his own soul**" Jesus asks in Matthew 16. (16:26)

If you would have **aliveness** now and forever, then beware of and repent of every form of covetousness! Seek your **wealth** in God your Savior through His Word and Sacrament! For this wealth consists in pardon, peace, and eternal salvation from sin! And whoever possesses these saving gifts of God by faith has **life itself forever!**

Our gracious God may or may not bless our lives and labors with many earthly possessions. But may we all receive grace to say with King David from our hearts: "**Whom do I have in heaven but You, (O Lord). And there is none upon earth that I desire beside You. My flesh and my heart fail; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever.**" (Ps. 73:25-26) Amen.