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## Are You a Fool or a Wise Man?

*January 28, 2018*

**Scripture Reading:** Luke 12

Luk 12:13-21 Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." (14) But he said to him, "Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?" (15) And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

(16) And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man produced plentifully, (17) and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' (18) And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. (19) **And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax,**

**eat, drink, be merry."** (20) But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?'

(21) So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."

Most people allow this present world to shape their thinking – to form what we call their “worldview.” You have a worldview, and so do I. The only question is, is it true or not? This rich fool Jesus spoke about and used to warn us had a worldview that drove his actions and priorities. We can rather accurately describe his thinking about life, about existence, about eternity:

- Personal enjoyment is the most important quest in life
- Enjoyment in life comes from obtaining wealth
- The possession of wealth is the mark of a blessed life
- Happiness and fulfillment and purpose in life comes from *gluttony* – the unbridled

consumption of wealth. Eat drink and be merry.

- Security comes from amassing a large fortune – money, in other words, can indeed buy happiness and protection from all life’s dangers
- This present life is looonnngggg. There is no need to think about death and in fact it is wrong to do so.
- One’s life is one’s own. Each man for himself. Sharing wealth is a mark of weakness. The poor do not deserve.

But God said...*tonight!*

You probably noticed a few sad stories in the news this past week of people dying suddenly. Here in Oregon, a young boy over in Pilot Rock crashed on his bicycle and cut his knee. His mother took him to the ER and they cleaned up the wound, put a few stitches in it, and back home they went.

In just a few days, he was dead. That flesh-eating bacteria as it’s popularly called had gotten into the wound and no amount of surgeries were able to stop it. His life lasted just 8 years, and came to a sudden, sad, end.

And then there have been cases in the news lately of healthy, young adults contracting the flu. In just a few days,

they were dead. I think one such case was over in Gresham recently.

All of these cases demonstrate the foolishness of the rich fool. I hope that all of these people in these cases knew Christ. One thing is for sure – none of them thought that their life was about to end. But it did.

One way or another, each one of us is going to depart this present life one day. Sooner. Or later. And the Bible makes it plain, as we have already said, that the way “things work” in our relationship to God and eternity is:

*Right now counts forever*

The way that rich fool lived his life, his choice to live for himself and to refuse to thank and acknowledge God, is resting upon him *forever*. Right now. What he is, where he is at this moment – was determined by the choices he made in his earthly life. He chose self, and therefore he chose hell.

What choice are you making? What would that rich fool, or any person who is in hell right now, what would they give to have one more shot at it? To have one more chance. *To have the opportunity that YOU have right now? That of making the right choices so that you will hear Christ say “enter into My kingdom” rather than “depart from Me, I never knew you.”*

Now, make no mistake. *This warning from Christ is not simply for people who are rich.* Don't dismiss it as applying to yourself by saying, "well, I don't have piles of money like that guy did." No. There are all kinds of "wealth" this world is going to dangle in front of your nose to try to get you to pursue it instead of following Christ. For example:

Let me address the young people here. Not to pick on you – all of us no matter what age we are need to heed what Jesus warns us of here. But we old people do not want you to get caught up in that powerful suction that would draw you away from Christ and into the world, like this rich fool was.

So, consider – You go to school. As soon as you walk in the door, or even before you do, the pressure is on, right? All kinds of intense, complicated pressure –

- How do I look to others?
- What does that group over there in the hallway think of me?
- How do I talk and act so that the guys and gals I hang with will like me and accept me?
- There is that one "special" girl or guy, one smile from whom melts me

That rich fool Jesus warned us about, you see, was once a teenager.

Whatever the school was in those days, he went to it. And over time, *he formed his worldview. He decided what his priorities in life would be. He determined what he wanted and he followed that course.* And in the end, well –

Pro 16:25 There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.
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***Your life in this world is going to end one day. You are going to die. It is a certainty. The rich fool lived in denial of that fact. And what he did, the choices he made, in his short life determined his "forever." So it is for I all of us – for YOU.***

The choices that you make right now so very often set you on a course that will characterize the rest of your life. Sure, some people come to know Christ later in life and by His mercy a radical change is effected in them – like the Apostle Paul. But in the majority of cases, people determine their course fairly early on in life. Just like the rich fool.

What course are you choosing? Christ, or the world? Light or darkness?

I saw another news story this week about a young couple engaged to be married. They are going ahead with the wedding, even though the groom has

terminal cancer and only a few more weeks to live. They planned this wedding for a long time. They have looked forward to it and like all of us assumed that they would enjoy a long life together. But it was not to be. In a very short time, he will depart this life and she will be a widow. That is the nature of this brief life, really for all of us. Here are some powerful reminders:

Ecc 6:12 For who knows what is good for man while he lives the few days of his vain life, which he passes like a shadow? For who can tell man what will be after him under the sun?

Ecc 11:9 Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. Walk in the ways of your heart and the sight of your eyes. **But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment.**

Psa 90:10-12 The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away. (11) Who considers the power of your anger, and your wrath according to the fear of you? (12) **So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.**

Jas 4:13-14 Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year

there and trade and make a profit"-- (14) yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? **For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.**

Choices we make. The choices we make, count forever. That is to say, *the things that we choose to love, count forever. For good or for evil.*

- What we treasure
- Who we marry
- What friends we associate with
- The career we choose
- The entertainment we choose and we spend our leisure time
- How we choose to behave toward others
- Choices, choices, choices

Let me elaborate on one common choice that we are all faced with in this life and which, if a wrong choice is made, has great power to lead us away from Christ and into hell.

Mat 10:34-39 "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. (35) For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. (36) And a person's enemies will be those of his own household.

(37) Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. (38) And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. (39) Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

### Troy Landry, King of the Swamp and the Most Important Thing in Life:

I really like the History Channel series Swamp People. If you haven't watched it, let me give you some background. It is set in the bayous and swamps of southern Louisiana. Cajan country. And it is about alligator season and the local gator hunters who go after them for 30 days each year. While catching the gators is an exciting element of the show, just as important is the personalities and way of life that are highlighted.

So, the self-proclaimed "King of the Swamp" is a guy named Troy Landry. I didn't like him all that much at first because he is rather arrogant, but over time I see that much of that is self-confidence. His sons go gator hunting with him and they have a tight family with lots of family gatherings around a pot of *jumbalaya*.

But here is the point I want to emphasize in this illustration. If you

were to ask Troy "what is the most important thing in life?" I can tell you what his answer would be because he states it very frequently on the show. Troy would say:

*Family is the most important thing in life. If you have family, you have everything even if you have nothing else. This is what life is all about.*  
*Family.*

I can almost hear people applauding and wishing they had a family like Troy's.

Troy may be king of the swamp and an expert gator hunter. He may even be, and probably is, a nice guy. But Troy is dead wrong here. His worldview is one that will take him to hell and his whole family along with him if they don't break from his thinking. His words run absolutely counter to Christ's:

(37) Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. (38) And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

Troy would probably tell you that he is a Christian, as would so many of the people down there in the bayous. They are all the time using the Lord's name, pronouncing his blessing on one thing

and His curses on another. They probably all pop into a local church now and then and their pastors assure them that all is well between them and the Lord. But it surely is not.

It has been my experience as a pastor that one of the chief obstacles that prevents people, by their own choosing, from following Christ is *family*.

- He is family. She is family. We are family.
- They are my parents. I could never break from them
- Yes, I know she is wicked and evil and hates Christ and causes all kinds of trouble for us, but she is my sister. She is family.

Yet Jesus said:

Luk 8:19-21 Then his mother and his brothers came to him, but they could not reach him because of the crowd. (20) And he was told, "Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see you." (21) But he answered them, "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it."

Do not miss the absolute necessity of this. Jesus said – hear Him again:

(37) Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. (38) And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

And again:

Luk 9:59-60 To another he said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." (60) And Jesus said to him, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

It is incredible to me how powerful the forces of these family bondages are in people's lives. And yet if we are to follow Christ we must make right choices. We cannot choose even family when to do so would mean not choosing and not obeying Christ.

So then, *what choices are you making right now? What choices will you make in days to come?* Will you be, or are you, the fool Jesus talked about? A person who embraces as their first love this present world and the things in it? Or will you embrace Christ and give up everything to follow Him?

One choice lasts a few short days and ends in death. The other will take you in Christ to a new life that will never end. Which choice will you be making when you leave here today, when you

go off to school tomorrow, when you choose who your friends are going to be, who you will marry, what your relationship will be to your family, what things you will treasure?

1Jn 2:15-17 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. (16) For all that is in the world--the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life--is not from the Father but is from the world. (17) And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

Let me close with these comments by J.C. Ryle – [The Gospel of Matthew, J.C. Ryle, 1856]

In these verses the great Head of the Church winds up His first charge to those whom He sends forth to make known His Gospel. He declares three great truths, which form a fitting conclusion to the whole discourse.

In the first place, He bids us remember that ***His Gospel will not cause peace and agreement wherever it comes.*** "I didn't come to send peace, but a sword." The object of His first coming on earth was not to set up a millennial kingdom in which all would be of one mind, but to bring in the Gospel, which would *lead* to strifes and divisions. We have no right to

be surprised, if we see this continually fulfilled. We are not to think it strange, if the Gospel rends asunder families, and causes estrangement between the nearest relations. It is sure to do so in many cases, because of the deep corruption of man's heart. So long as one man believes, and another remains unbelieving — so long as one is resolved to keep his sins, and another desirous to give them up, the result of the preaching of the Gospel must needs be division. For this the Gospel is not to blame, but the heart of man.

There is a deep truth in all this, which is constantly forgotten and overlooked. Many talk vaguely about unity, and harmony, and peace in the Church of Christ, as if they were things that we ought always to expect, and for the sake of which everything ought to be sacrificed. Such people would do well to remember the words of our Lord. No doubt unity and peace are mighty blessings. We ought to seek them, pray for them, and give up everything in order to obtain them, excepting truth and a good conscience. But it is an idle dream to suppose that the churches of Christ will enjoy much of unity and peace before the millennium comes.

In the second place, our Lord tells us *that true Christians must make up their minds to trouble in this world.* Whether we are ministers or hearers, whether we teach or are taught, it makes little difference. We

must carry "a cross." We must be content to lose even life itself for Christ's sake. We must submit to the loss of man's favor, we must endure hardships, we must deny ourselves in many things, or we shall never reach heaven at last. So long as the world, the devil, and our own hearts, are what they are, these things must be so.

We shall find it most useful to remember this lesson ourselves, and to impress it upon others. Few things do so much harm in religion as exaggerated expectations. People look for a degree of worldly comfort in Christ's service which they have no right to expect, and not finding what they look for, are tempted to give up religion in disgust. Happy is he who thoroughly understands, that though Christianity holds out a crown in the end, it brings also a cross in the way.