

Watch 'Your Stuff'

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- [0 : 0 0] Happy Father's Day, guys. How you doing? Welcome to Watermark. And if this is your first time or your millionth time, we are glad that you're here to worship the Lord with us. And we have a very special day.
- So I thought, I need some help. I need some helpers. And so if you're a kid, can you come up here and help me for one second, please? Just come right here. All the kiddos, come on. You don't have to cling to me, but just sit right there, okay?
- All the kids, come on, guys. Oh. Hey. Okay, guys, I need your help, okay? So can someone tell me what today is besides Sunday?
- Father's Day. Father's Day. And what does Father's Day mean? Father's Day. To do what now? Father's Day means give a present to your daddy. That is so good. So how many of you guys are going to take your dad out to lunch today and be nice to him? How many of you guys are going to give your dad a brand new watch today? Wow. What great kids. Hey, so what I want to do is I need your help.
- We have these special gifts made for our dads. And so I'm going to have all the dads and all the men in the church, all the men in the church stand up. Okay, so all the men in the church stand up now.
- [1 : 3 5] Kids, push your, come on, Albert. You're a man. Stand up. Okay. All the men stand up. Okay, guys. Hey, guys, listen to me. Look at me. I need your help. Can you help me pray for the dads? Okay?
- So I'm going to pray, and you just pray right after me, okay? Okay? Let's pray. Dear God, thank you for our dads. Guard their heart. Help them to love you. Help us to obey them.
- Help us to obey them. We love you. Amen. Okay, guys, this is what I need to do. I need all the kids to take these cards. Men, stand up still. Take these cards, and I want you to hand them out to any man standing up and say, Happy Father's Day. Thank you so much. Okay? Thank you. So hand it to your daddy and hand it to people. Here you go. Here you go. Just go hand them out. Just hand them out to your dads.
- Wow, crazy chaos. Okay. Everybody got them? There you go. Here you go, Willow. Good job, guys. And after the dads get their card, you can sit down. Okay. Pass them out. Okay. Here you go.
- Take them. Take them. Okay. Good. There you go. Okay. Go give them to your dads. And after that, kids, you are dismissed. Watermark kids. So every daddy standing up, make sure you give them a card. Okay. After that, Watermark kids are dismissed, and youth are dismissed with Eric.
- [3 : 0 9] The scripture reading today comes from the Gospel of Luke, chapter 12. Please follow along in your bulletin. Someone in the crowd said to him, Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.
- But he said to him, Man, who appointed me to be a judge or arbitrator over you? Then he said to them, Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed.

For not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions. And he told them a parable, saying, The land of a rich man was very productive. And he began reasoning to himself, saying, What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?

Then he said, This is what I will do. I will tear down my barns and build larger ones. And there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come.

Take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said to him, You fool, this very night your soul is required of you. And now who will own what you have prepared?

[4 : 19] So is the man who stores up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God. This is the reading of God's word. I got stuff.

Good stuff. Happy stuff. Successful, sensational, recreational, relaxational stuff. Mac stuff.

PC stuff. I stuff. Cool fashion. Cool fashion. Fast cash. Fast action. Rocket chips and chocolate chips. Stuff with crosses.

Christian fishes. Stuff beyond my wildest wishes. And you can't take my stuff. My stuff is a needle that drops to the vinyl to start the party and spin the spiral.

My stuff impressively, incessantly, illuminates my import. And my stuff is loud. It demands respect.

[5 : 19] And you can't neglect when my stuff says, I have arrived and this is what I'm all about. My stuff demands respect.

It identifies me. And I identify with my stuff. My stuff is the needle that tattoos my skin, signifying the significance of who I am.

You can't handle my stuff. I got stuff. I got stuff. Stuff.

Stuff from my past. That follows me around like some run-down evangelist carnival caravan that keeps coming to town.

In the amusement park dark. Saints from the shadows shout my shattered story.

[6 : 34] Selling success souvenirs. And soulful sideshows. Their slanted slogans solicit me.

Slander me. Compel me. Tell me. Tell me fortunes that I regret. I can't forget. And surrendering or seeking grace.

I surrender to the stuff spell. But it conjures no confession. No communion. Just a constant carousel of clamor.

That casts out the quiet and the question so I don't have to hear my heart beat. My stuff is a ferris wheel that takes me to the top.

Then brings me right back down again. I spin and I turn and I want off. But the ride never stops.

[7 : 53] I got stuff. I got stuff. My stuff is the elevator to the penthouse floor.

Sometimes no matter what button I push. I can't seem to open the door. You can't handle my stuff.

You can't handle my stuff. My stuff is the needle that injects my vein.

And it's warm like a fever. And it spreads like a stain. And it itches. And I scratch until it burns like a blaze. But all I have is this nothing.

And I can't stop the flame. I can't stop the flame. I can't stop the flame. I can't stop the flame. I can't. I can't. I can't. I got stuff.

[9 : 05] I can't handle my stuff. You can't take my stuff. You can't take my stuff. Can you?

Can you? Take my stuff? I kind of feel like I just need to say amen after that.

Finish our time. We're talking about stuff. We're talking about life. If you've been with us for any amount of time, you've heard us talk about stories that we're all writing out and living out our story right now.

If you've been here for any amount of time, you hear us talking about journeys. We're all on a journey. And the interesting thing about this journey is that we're all following someone or something or stuff.

Some of us are following Ben Bernanke. Some of us are following Jamie Dimon. Some of us are following Li Kai-shing. Some of us are following Warren Buffett.

[10 : 33] Some of us are trying to follow Christ. But the stuff crowds out our life.

And we don't know how to handle it. We're continuing the story of stuff and the journey. Last week we talked about being in a minefield.

We talked about that we walk into a minefield. And in this field there are things that can disable us and hurt us and cause us to be enslaved.

Jesus talked last week about that thing as the leaven of the Pharisees, hypocrisy. We talked about wearing a mask, being different in different places and acting different ways because people expect you to act certain ways.

And we said in the midst of all of that, we lose the gospel. We de-gospelize ourself. We're clinging to Christ and we're on this journey. And all of a sudden we break free and we cling on to position and power and material things.

[11 : 41] And we lose the power of the Holy Spirit. We lose the power of the gospel. As I was praying through this sermon today, I was reminded of a story.

And it begins as all good stories begin. And the interesting thing about this story is I think that if we're honest, we see it lived out every day in our life. We see it lived out every day in people's lives all around us.

And this story begins like every story should begin. Come on. How does every story begin? Once upon a time.

Once upon a time in Hong Kong, there lived a very important man or woman. I'm just going to say a man. He routinely logged in 12 to 14 hours of work a day. And sometimes on weekends, he went to Stanford and Thunderbird and then the Harvard School of Management.

He got top honors. He qualified in his chosen field and decided to broaden his horizons by joining every professional institute he could. Indeed, he joined a number of boards and he was on the directors.

[12 : 46] He read books on Genghis Khan and management and how to swim with the sharks. And even when he wasn't working, his mind wandered back to his job, which not was his occupation but became his preoccupation.

He found a 40-hour work week such a good idea that he often did it twice. His wife tried to slow him down to remind him that he had a family. He knew they were not as close as they had once been.

He had not intended for them to drift away. It just seemed that she wanted time from him. And that was just something that he didn't have to give because he gave it all at the office.

He was vaguely aware of his kids that they were growing up and they were missing him. From time to time, his kids would complain about the books that he wasn't reading to them and the games he wasn't going to them and all of these things.

And he would get angry and he says, I'm doing it all for you. Just wait. Soon it's all going to get better and our future will be assured.

[13 : 48] One day his chief operations officer came to him and he said, you're not going to believe this but business is booming. I mean it's out of control. We can't keep up with it. It's a miracle. But with the present technology that we have, we can't keep in the market.

We can't make a killing. So he put the company through a technological revolution. The buzzword was 24-7 connectivity. There was phones everywhere in the bathrooms and in the conference rooms and everybody was connected by Wi-Fi, BlackBerrys, iPhones.

As he sat at his computer that night rearranging the company, he had overlooked one microscopic detail. He had overlooked an artery that had once been so supple, as supple as a blade of grass, but now was dry and brittle like cement.

For more than a century, his heart had been pumping 70 milliliters of blood with every contraction, 14,000 pints each day, 100,000 beats in 24 hours, all of this happening without him ever having to send a memo or giving a reminder or a performance review.

Now it skipped a beat, and it skipped another beat, and a third, and he grasped his chest, and he breathed for air, and for a moment he was given the gift of blinding clarity.

[15 : 09] Even though he sat on the top of hundreds of organizational charts, it turned out that he wasn't in control of his own pulse. Funny thing, he was thinking as he was dying, hundreds of people on multiple continents would listen and heed every word, but now a few ounces of hardened muscle in his heart wouldn't obey him.

His wife woke up at 3 a.m., and she was still looking next to herself, and she saw that he wasn't in bed, and she went downstairs to drag him up out of bed, and she saw that he was laying in front of the computer, head on the desk, and she just yelled to herself, this is ridiculous.

It's like I'm being married to a child. He would rather fall asleep in front of the screen than come to bed. She touched him on the shoulder to wake him up, and he didn't respond, and his skin was eerily cold.

She quickly dialed 999, and when the paramedics got there, it was too late, and they told her that he had died of a massive heart attack. His death was a major story in the financial community.

The obituary appeared in the South China Morning Post, and then the tattler. It was too bad that he was dead, because he would have loved to hear what people were saying about him. They came to the funeral because of his prominence in the community.

[16 : 28] People filed past his open casket, and they commented on how peaceful he looked. Death has a way of doing that, of making us look peaceful.

Death is nature's way of saying you're working too hard. You need to slow down. And as they followed past, they asked the same question that everybody always asks when someone rich dies, how much money did he leave?

He left it all. We always leave it all. People got up to eulogize him. Mostly they talked about his accomplishments, because everyone knew about him, but no one really knew him.

He was one of the leading entrepreneurs of the day. He was an innovator in technology. He was a man of principles. He never cheated on his taxes. He never cheated on his expense sheet. He never cheated on his wife.

He was a pillar of the community. Everybody knew that. Everybody saw how great he was. He was an amazing networker. This guy could network everything. He never cheated on his side. He never cheated on his side. They commissioned a large marble monolith by his grave, and on it they wrote visionary, innovator, leader, entrepreneur.

[17 : 39] And at the top of the monolith, they wrote this huge word, success. But when it was dark and no one was around, the angel of God was sent to the cemetery.

Unseen and unheard, the angel made its way past all of the monuments, until it came to his wonderful monument. And in the quiet, the angel traced with his finger on the monolith the words that God had used to describe him.

F-O-O-L. Fool. You fool. This night, your soul will be required of you.

As I think of this story, I just think maybe there's a parallel going on with this parable of what's happening in Europe, in the States, in Asia.

We're so busy accumulating stuff for ourselves that we haven't taken time off to think about God and to thank him for where we are.

[18 : 57] I guess a challenge this morning for me and for all of us as we think about this parable is am I, are we making efforts to be richer towards God or are we just interested in getting more stuff?

Chapter 12, Jesus is talking to his disciples in this very interesting passage because as he's giving this amazing sermon, this young man stands up and he yells out a question which has nothing to do with the sermon.

Meaning, you wonder what people are thinking. Here, he's the greatest communicator of all time and even the people in the congregation aren't clued in to his words. It kind of gives me comfort as a pastor because I wonder sometimes what you're thinking out there.

Does all he own is blue shirts? Well, at least his belt and his shoes are matched today. But the guy comes and he asks Jesus this incredible question and I want to take these couple minutes just to look at it because I think there's so much more we need to learn from this passage and it's found in verse 13 through 21 of Luke 12.

It's interesting when he asks this question, Jesus never answers the question that people ask. He always answers the problem that's in their heart. in our heart.

[20 : 31] And so this guy asked this question if you look at it in your bulletin this is, I'm going to look through this really quickly and we're going to make, we're going to go through this. I want to run through this and we'll make some points about the text and see what we have to learn here.

I want to share with you some things that I've been learning these last couple weeks and then I want to do a quick exercise and then you're dismissed for Father's Day.

So in verse 13 someone in a crowd yelled out to him, teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me. Someone, we don't know who it is, he yells out, rabbi, respected person, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.

Those listening would have known exactly what had happened. The father had died and the boy yelling out was the younger son and the older son who got two-thirds of the inheritance would always divide up the inheritance when it was his time but he hadn't done it yet and the younger son was frustrated because he wanted his stuff.

It's interesting in this passage, he doesn't ask God to fix the relationship between him and the older brother. He doesn't say, God, our relationship is broken. We're arguing with each other.

[21 : 46] I know that we've never seen this happen in Hong Kong and you've never seen this happen in your life when someone dies and then everybody starts arguing over the stuff but it happened in Jesus' day and the guy doesn't ask Jesus to fix the relationship.

He doesn't ask to mend hearts. He doesn't say, hey, check me because maybe my motives are wrong. Maybe something's going on here. Can you bring me back to my brother? All he asks Jesus is I want my stuff. Give me my stuff.

In verse 14, Jesus says, man, who appointed me a judge or arbitrated over you? It's a very strong word. In the Middle Eastern, everybody listening would have been freaking out because it was like Jesus was disgusted with this guy.

And so he doesn't even call him by name even though he would have known his name because he knows everything but he addresses him just as a man. And then he shares in verse 15, beware, pay attention, understand, learned about, stay away from, be on your guard, always be constant, active, diligent, look around of every form.

There's more than one form. There's position, there's power, there's possession of greed, coveting, wanting things that aren't yours, wanting more than you need, wanting a surplus that's not healthy.

[23 : 00] Beware of these things because not even when one of you has an abundance does his life consist of these things.

Jesus looks at the guy's heart. He looks at our heart and he says, you know, you have a problem and your problem is greed.

You have a problem and your problem is coveting. And it's interesting because greed and coveting is so subtle, it's so behind the scenes.

No one has ever come to me and confessed, you know, I have a problem with greed. Can you pray for me? I've had people say, I've had a problem with my wife, I have a problem with my anger, I have a problem with materialism, kind of, but I have a problem with these other things, but never I have a problem with greed.

But the scripture talks about it over and over and I think the thing that's scary about greed and hypocrisy is if we walk into that minefield, if we go down that road, we start living out a life that's hypocritical.

[24 : 18] And so Jesus is so concerned about this and he says, be careful of this, beware of this, it's going to destroy you. It's the tenth commandment, thou shall not covet.

It's the loving of stuff, it's the hoarding of stuff. If I were to pick one sin that I would say is probably the chief sin, I would probably say it's greed and coveting.

I mean, think about it. It's the sin that got the angels kicked out of heaven. They wanted to be like God, they wanted the things of God, they wanted to know and act like God and they got kicked out of the, it was a sin that got Adam and Eve kicked out of the garden.

They wanted to be like God, they wanted to have the things of God, they wanted to have the knowledge of God and it seems like from that time on it's been the sin that causes quarrels, wars, strife, division, envy, disputes, jealousy, hatred.

We can covet a lot of things, we can be greedy about a lot of things, the passage says that, many things be careful of. We can be coveted about possessions, about stuff. We can be greedy about positions, titles and jobs and offices, I want those things.

[25 : 39] We can be greedy about power. In the book of Romans, when Paul looked at his life, he looked at his life outwardly and he said, look at me, I'm perfect.

I'm a Jew of Jews, I've kept all the requirements, I keep all the laws, I've done everything. But in Romans 7, he looks at his heart. He doesn't look outwardly but he looks inwardly like God calls us to.

And he looks at his heart and he goes, I have a problem. And this problem is that I covet. I see things that other people have and I want those things and all of these things are coming into my world and Paul realizes that sin has invaded his life and has changed him.

Ultimately, greed and coveting is an attempt to find satisfaction and happiness and ultimate meaning in things that are temporary instead of God.

it seems like when we do that, we're walking along as Christians and we're attached to the gospel and the power of the Holy Spirit and all of a sudden we just kind of de-gospelize or we decouple and we say, no, I'm not going to trust in that anymore, I'm going to trust in my money.

[27 : 12] Or no, I'm not going to trust in that anymore, I'm going to trust in my position. And as we head down that path, the scripture says that we become slaves to the things that we really want and we desire.

Does anybody have a problem with coveting and greed in here? Let me ask a couple questions. Are you content where you're at? Financially, location, your job.

I mean, as you look at your life right now, do you think that this present condition is the best condition you could be in? Are you content with where God has you?

I mean, could you say to God right now, God, you have me in the best place possible. I mean, I cannot imagine any other better thing, God, you've had me in exactly the best place.

With my family, with my finances, with my job, with my location, with my house, with my car. God, you have me exactly where I need to be. Or would you say, like me, man, if I were God, I would do things a little differently.

[28 : 25] I'd probably get a 20% more raise and drive a little nicer car and I don't know about this house, maybe I should own it instead of renting it because I'm just wasting all this money. That's just me.

Do you rejoice when your friend and your neighbor prospers? When your friend gets something that you don't have but you want, can you say, man, I'm so excited for them.

I'm so excited that their family has got it together. I'm so excited that that husband loves his wife and spends time with them. I'm so excited that that wife respects her husband.

I'm so excited that those kids, they got into Harvard finally and that's, that's just amazing. I'm so excited for them. I mean, I want those things but I'm just, I'm just really glad they got that new iPad and that new Mac PowerBook that you can bend like that.

That's really cool but I'm really excited they got it. Can you say that? Or do you say, I need to go buy that really cool Mac PowerBook before they see that I don't have it so they just assume that I already have it too and then we're both cool.

[29 : 41] Do you want what you have? Now be very careful this is gonna, this is gonna take some brain cells, okay? Do you want what you have is not having what you want.

I know that sounds like a country western song. I want what I have, I want what I don't have but do you want what you have right now? Or do you wanna have what you want for the future?

Are you generous with what you have? As you get more money, if you get a pays, if you get a bonus, do you think, oh how can I give this away to people? How can this go towards the church?

How can this build up treasures in heaven? How can I help people with this money? Or do you think, well this is my great opportunity to finally get my car upgraded? Or this is a great opportunity for me to change my lifestyle because I deserve a better lifestyle because I've worked so hard for it.

Are we generous with what God gives us? All these questions I ask myself all the time. And Jesus wants us to ask these things of us because he's worried that we're gonna walk down this road.

[30 : 57] That we're gonna walk into this minefield and this minefield is gonna enslave us and destroy us and change us and the mine that we're worried about stepping on today is greed and coveting.

Are you following me? The rest of the passage, Jesus basically just says, here are some things you need to be aware of. If you walk down this path, you're gonna step on a mine.

And we're gonna run through them. I wanna run through them with you right now. The first thing Jesus says in verse 16 as you look at your bulletin, Jesus warns that we're heading into the minefield, that we're gonna become greedy, that we're gonna worry about coveting if we just focus on ourselves and not on God.

Look at the passage. He told them a parable saying, the land of the rich man was very productive. Now remember, parables are stories. The word actually means to lay beside.

So Jesus is talking to everybody and he lays out this story right in front of them and he says, okay, now take your life and lay your life down beside the story and compare and see how you're doing. And so he shares this first thing, this first warning sign as you walk into this minefield and he says, the guy of a rich man, his land was very, very productive and Jesus warns us, he says, you're gonna walk into the minefield when you forget to give credit for God for what's going on in your life.

[32 : 24] You read in the passage, the guy only thinks of himself and he thinks, I did this, I made this happen. He looks at the harvest and he says, all of this was because I was a great planter.

But every farmer knows in farming that there's rain, there's hail, there's sun, there's locusts, there's timing, there's bacteria that get into the dirt.

All of these things can change the crop. But the rich man says, I did this, it's me. I made it happen. Now I've gotten some really serious arguments sometimes with people as I talked about this and sometimes people get really offended.

They go, I worked hard. I studied hard. I got into Harvard and I'm in where I am because of my work.

I've done everything and that is what has brought me here. And I listen to them. I go, you're right. I worked hard too and I studied hard.

[33 : 34] But you know, that has nothing to do with what country I was born in. And that has nothing to do with what time I was born. Statistics tell us that if we were born one year later or one year earlier or five years later or five years earlier for sure, we would not be where we are right now.

We didn't choose our parents. We didn't choose what we would look like. We didn't choose that we would have eyes.

And all of these things that God has given us, our mind, our body, where we're at, all of these things have brought us where we are right now. But the farmer looks at that and he goes, no, it's me.

I did it. I made it all happen. I took a group of students when I was living in China to an orphanage. And it was interesting to see their reaction when we walked into the orphanage.

And we were playing with the kids and several of the kids had nothing wrong with them except for like a little spot on their cheek, a little birthmark. And one of the guys looked at this orphan with that little birthmark, that little physical scar on him and he started to cry and he ran out of the room.

[34 : 58] And I caught up with him and I said, what's going on? And he goes, I realize that the only reason I'm here right now studying in this university is because I wasn't born with a mark on my face.

Because if I had any imperfection, my parents would have sent me to the orphanage. I have a good friend, he shares his testimony and he talks about how when his parents, he was in his mother's stomach and one of the tests came back later in stage of life and it said there was a 50% chance that he was going to have an abnormality, genetic, and that he would never be able to survive in the real world.

And the doctors encouraged and encouraged and encouraged his parents to abort him. And his parents, which is amazing, they weren't Christ followers but they said, we believe that for some reason we have this child and we're going to keep this child and they kept him and he was born perfectly normal.

For some of us, the only reason we're here right now is because the doctors read our medical charts right, no abnormality came back in the blood work and our parents decided to keep us instead of abort us.

But the farmer doesn't know that. The farmer thinks it's all about him. He did it all and what Jesus is trying to tell us is if you run down that road, you're going to get in trouble because you're going to become greedy and you're going to become lost.

[36 : 42] He warns us in verse 17, again, be careful. The man began reasoning to himself. He's all by himself. Everyone listening would have been freaking out because he's all by himself and everyone in that culture was communal.

He said to himself, I shall do this and I will do that and no place to store my crops and then he said this is what I will do. I will tear down my barns and I'll build larger ones and they'll store all my grains and my goods and Jesus warns us again.

He says be careful when you separate yourself from other people. Be careful when you separate yourself from God because when you start thinking that ownership is yours and you're not a steward, you're in trouble and you're going to become greedy Jesus is warning us and he's warning the audience that he's teaching to that it's not our stuff, it's not our crop, it's not our barn, it's not our house, it's not our car, it's not our bank account.

At least five more times in the Gospel of Luke he's going to talk about these exact same things and he's going to say the only reason you have what you have is because God gave it to you.

I read this passage and I thought wow this is kind of like the typical Hong Kong lifestyle, isn't it? I mean you think about it, many of us in Hong Kong we want to improve our lifestyle. We want to increase our wealth, we find more ways to improve our lifestyle, we find more ways to enjoy ourselves, we want to store up wealth, we want to store up stuff so that we can enjoy them when we're old.

[38 : 13] We're always planning for the future, we're making good investments in stocks and insurance and wine and property. You notice this guy, he's not yelled at or criticized for being a good planner because the Bible wants us to plan for our future but what the guy is criticized for is that he leaves God out of the plans.

He says, I'm going to do it, I can do it. In verse 19, Jesus goes on and he tells his audience and he tells us, I will say to my soul, in Greek and Hebrew, he's actually saying myself, self, you have many goods laid up for many years to come.

Take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry. I mean, he's so busy thinking about his physical body. We're so busy thinking about our physical body.

that we forget our soul. And Jesus warns him and he warns us, be careful, be careful, be careful because your future isn't in your control.

It's in God's control. Finally, in verse 20, verse 21, Jesus shares with us and he shares with his congregation.

[39 : 46] But God said to him, you fool, this very night your soul is required of you and now who will own what you have been prepared? So is the man who stores up treasure for himself and is not rich towards God.

All up until this point, it's just been the guy speaking. I will do this, I will do that, I will do these things. And all of a sudden, God speaks and he speaks in a very powerful way and he calls him a fool.

In scripture, in the Bible, a fool is anyone who disbelieves God or disregards God's teaching. And if you look at this parable, you realize, finally, after all of his time, the rich, famous farmer realizes that everything isn't his.

his life's not his. His stuff's not his. His self's not his. And actually, the words is required is a banking term.

What Jesus is saying is everything that's on loan to you, margin call, everything's back. Everything that I've given you, I need it back.

[40 : 58] And in this moment, the guy realizes as he walks through life, all those things he was clinging on for significance and who he was and to bring power and people recognize him, all of these things that weren't really his, he has to give them back.

And he's left with nothing. I mean, these are harsh words. I understand it. I mean, because the world would say this guy was successful and he was good and he was famous, but when we look at Scripture, Jesus looks at this man in verse 21 and he turns back to the man who yells out at the very beginning and he says these words, so is the man who stores up treasure for himself.

He is not rich towards God. He's living like a fool. Are we living like a fool today?

Where are we storing up our riches? What are we thinking about as we walk through life? Are we thinking that it's me, me, me who's did it?

Or do we think God has brought me to this place, God has given me sight, God has allowed me to hear, God has given me the health and he has allowed me to be here? Here's some thoughts I want to run through really quickly.

[42 : 22] These are things that I've been struggling with in the last couple weeks. I know I say it every time. But yeah. My first thought is this.

Life is a gift on loan. Each day is a gift and everything we have belongs to God. It's a gift to be used, enjoyed, and returned.

And when we start thinking that we own it, we're in trouble. Number two, every moment we have a choice, are we going to live our life for ourself or towards God?

There's only two choices in the Bible. And I know this might run some of you away because we hear different gospels sometimes, but in the Bible it says we only have two choices. Are we going to live our lives towards God or towards ourself?

Are we going to store up treasures for ourselves or are we going to store up treasures in heaven? Both of these storings involve trust. Whenever you give something to somebody and they store it, you have to trust them.

[43 : 32] You're trusting the bank, you're trusting the institution, you're trusting your banker, you're trusting your investment guy, or you're trusting God. But there's a huge element of trust in there. And what this guy realizes is that storing up things here on earth ultimately failed him.

because the abundance of our life doesn't guarantee our eternity. Here's the question I want to ask.

I've been very hesitant to ask this. If God were an investment banker and he looks at your life and he realizes everything that he's put into your life, money, talents, connections, family, health, eyesight, stopping that drunk car from hitting you when you should have been wiped out.

God, as an investment banker, and the only return God wants in your life is treasures in heaven. Because that's what the Bible says. So God is an investment banker.

He's invested all these things in your life. Have we been a good investment for him?

[45 : 08] I mean, have we brought the return that an investment banker would have expected? Now this has nothing to do with our salvation, right?

The gospel saves us. We're not working to earn our salvation. We're already a child of God. We're walking with him. That's the power of the gospel. But after that, God continues to build into us and he continues to invest into us and he continues to give to us.

And the question we have to ask ourselves is, are we a good investment? if the only thing he expects is treasures stored in heaven?

Have we been dealing with God's word? Have we been in community? Have we been giving and tithing and helping people less fortunate than ourselves? When we look at our neighbors, the two great commandments, love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, and soul.

Look at your neighbor, love your neighbor as yourself. The guy asked, who is my neighbor? He said, your neighbor, is anybody in need? Take care of them. Heavenly investments. Have we been a good return on those things?

[46 : 25] The Bible says that Jesus was rich but for our sakes he became poor. He paid the debt that we owed God.

the debt that we owed God was hell. That's a bad debt. And Jesus paid that debt on the cross not by tithing his blood.

Okay, I'll give 20% now and maybe 30% later. He paid that debt because he gave everything. He poured out everything on the cross. Jesus is incredibly rich and generous towards everyone in this room.

And because he is we can be also. because he is we have the freedom to be also.

As I look at this passage and I think of greed and coveting I've been praying for us every day as a church. I'm praying that who we are our identity is not defined by where we live or where we meet.

[47 : 44] I'm praying that our identity isn't defined by the clothes we wear the barns or wealth that we accumulate where our kiddos go to school who we know the group of people we hang around our business card our family how big our business is how big our church is.

I'm praying that our identity isn't determined by those things because it is we're walking in this minefield and we're just as lost as the rich farmer. I'm praying as a church and as individuals that our identity is rooted firmly in God the gospel of Jesus Christ the grace of God that is poured out on the cross.

I want to do an exercise very quickly. At the very beginning I handed out money to about 20 people in this congregation. Would you please stand up and pass it out to everybody?

I know who you are so you can't run off with it okay? Every adult should get a one dollar bill.

Every adult. Everybody take one. Don't be a cutie. Everybody take one. I did a one dollar bill because I'm an American yeah you can give me a hard time.

[49 : 08] But also I felt like I won't get arrested if I were an American and I did this I'd get arrested because I wrote on American money right? So that's bad. So on the dollar bill just do as quick as you can buddy.

That's good. On the back of the dollar bill I want you to hold it up. Everybody have one? If you don't have one raise your hand. Dave you got some more? I want to give this to you.

Christina and I want to give this to you as a gift. Our hope is that you would put it we have more money any more money? We have any more?

Any more? Okay. Charles you want to hand it up? Raise your hand. Hold it up.

It's very interesting isn't it? Because on the back it says in God we trust. But what we wrote on there was a Bible verse Luke 12:21 So is the man who stores up treasure for himself and is not rich towards God.

[50:31] You can stick this in your Bible please don't put it in the offering box to convert it just to moff on. Okay. So don't do that.

But the reason I gave it to you is I want it you to take this and think about it as you go through this day and this week. I mean this passage tells us that God listen to me guys this passage tells us that God wants us to enjoy life but he doesn't want us to do it a part of a relationship with him and other people around us.

this passage tells us that God wants us to have stuff but he doesn't want us to worship it. He doesn't want it to become our gods he doesn't want us to forget that we're not owners but we're stewards and one day there's going to be a bell that rings inside your head your eyes are going to close and the next thing you do when you open up your eyes hopefully is you're going to see Jesus Christ and you're going to look around and you're not going to have any of the stuff that you had on earth with you.

The only thing you're going to have in your new home is the heavenly treasures that you sent ahead. That's it. And this passage tells us that God wants us to have stuff he wants us to enjoy things but he wants us to remember that it's not ours that ownership is a myth ownership is a myth even with our kids even with our life God gives it to us for a little while to enjoy and then one day he's going to ask for it back and hopefully we'll be with him enjoying eternity.

This passage tells us that God wants us to plan for our futures but he wants us to remember that our future isn't here that our future is in heaven and that's where he wants us to store our treasures not here but in heaven mine too Jesus says be careful you walking down that road everybody has that problem everybody has that problem is probably the greatest sin no one wants to talk about it because no one wants to say I'm greedy they'd rather say I look at pornography or I'm a drunk but they don't want to say I'm greedy but Jesus says we all struggle with it and we need to be careful we need to be careful Father we just thank you for this day I thank you for your mercy and your grace in our life we thank you for your goodness and Father we thank you for your word that is living and active and never changes and as we look at this parable of the rich farmer we realize that that's us if we're honest we realize that there's times that we've forgotten you we realize that there's times that we've forgotten community and fellowship we realize that there's times we think this stuff is ours we realize that there's times that we think that this is where we store our treasures and Father we just come before you and we just confess and we repent and we ask your forgiveness

[54:11] I know there are people in here even now who haven't even started the journey with Christ in our hope what you heard from this message is that God loves you and he so desires to have a relationship with you and our prayer is that you would stop having relationships with stuff things that will pass away one day and that you will have it with the eternal God who you can enjoy forever and for the rest of us I just pray Lord as we walk on this journey and we walk into these fields and these struggles that we would have brothers and sisters around us who care enough about us to ask us questions that we'd have brothers and sisters around us who care enough to pick us up when we fall and to point us into the right direction the direction of mercy and direction of grace and so Lord we just come before you as your people and we continue to think that your son was so rich and yet for us he became poor he paid the debt that we could never pay so that we might become rich as members of your family help this gospel message permeate all that we do may we be generous and gracious because we serve a God who is we love you amen