

Jesus lesson to American Baby Boomers.

13 And someone in the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me." 14 But He said to him, "Man, who appointed Me a judge or arbiter over you?" 15 And 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." 16 And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a certain rich man was very productive. 17 "And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?' 18 "And 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. 19 '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."' 20 "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?' 21 "So is the man who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

It's coming up on 3 years ago now that Pam and I were discussing building a bigger barn. We had bought the property parcel next to us on the south. And my idea was to build a garage that would make sense for some future owner who would build a home in front and centered. My barn would be at the rear and crowd the left side as you face it from the street.

I was dreaming of a certain size and getting estimates on concrete work. And my dear bride, a gift to me from God, pointed out that all spaces I control tend to be filled up with junk and this one would be no different.

I argued that my garage is messy because I'm simply trying to accomplish more in that space than it was designed for. More space would free me of the encroaching clutter, all of it too valuable to part with or toss out, and all would be well.

In our home I have a veto available that wisdom calculates to use sparingly. I could have built that barn even though I knew my wife had more than valid points. I don't possess the organization gene. I'm actually fairly happy in my

mess. Maybe it just looks like a mess to you. I can usually walk right to the general area where something I'm looking for was last seen.

Ultimately, it was this story exactly here by Jesus that throttled me. Not Pam, bless her heart, but what Jesus says here. And not some silly fear that God will kill me if I build that barn. I understand the underlying root cause very well.

I am a slave to one Master. The Lord, Kurios, Jesus Messiah. And the battle for balance is always in my mind. It's something I've struggled with all my 50 years as a christian. Single mindedness. Serving two masters.

What portion of my wealth is just the blessing of a benevolent God, given to me to enjoy, simply because He delights in my delights. He made me good at things. I'm good at photography. I'm good at buying derelict camera parts and pieces and restoring them to usefulness and re-selling them at a profit.

He made me good at things, and He delights in my enjoyment of the gifts He has given me. But the tension is always near. Do I love these more than thee? God forbid it!

I would hope every single christian who reads this study has had those same thoughts, or something similar, because God made each of us with different strengths and values. Your loves that He would question you about are different than mine. God always goes for the heart. Whatever it is that your heart delights in is going to be the thing that He will ask you about.

This is a unique story. Only Luke shares this event with us. And Luke has placed it here because Jesus is defining the other-worldliness of His kingdom compared with the values of this lost and perishing world.

In the first part of this long teaching, He addresses false religion. The hypocrisy of false religionists, and the danger they impose. Actual physical danger. False religionists will kill you, whereas greedy people usually won't. Greedy folk are less dangerous than religious folks of false religions.

Now Luke uses this transition story to address the other main folly of lost men in this world where Satan is ruler. Materialism. Stuff.

Some men are pre-disposed to travel at break neck speed down the dead end street of false religion, and others, not so much. To others, false religion, any religion, is foolishness. To them, the main thing to accomplish is to satisfy yourself with riches. Ease. Beauty. Live well. Relax. Also a dead end street.

These two areas encompass a huge swath of human endeavor, both of which would be categorized by the writer of Ecclesiastes as striving after wind. Striving after wind is mostly what we do in our 4 score of allotted years. In simpler terms, thinking of eternity, nothing. Mostly, we accomplish nothing.

As far as heaven's values are concerned, most inhabitants upon earth are accomplishing nothing at all of any consequence or eternal value. Nothing of value. And then when you weigh that in the balance with the other side of the scales being the weight of the truth that we were created in God's image with the design and task of bringing to Him worship that He is worthy of and Glory that He is due, and all of the nothing begins to add up to an unpayable debt. A liability that we have no possibility of correcting.

In Vss. 1 - 12 of chapter 12, the folly of false hypocritical religion. And in vss. 13 - 21, the folly of worldly success and wealth.

Think about it. Those two follies just about encompass everything we see the world around us engaging in. In the middle east, nations are about to annihilate each other over religious beliefs, and meanwhile, Boris Johnson has recovered from Covid 19 and welcomed a new baby son into the world whose mother is not Mr. Johnson's wife.

By the way, we can include politics and all of that endeavor in the general category of hypocritical false religion with lots of cross-over into the folly of worldly success. It has both motives working for it.

So Luke transitions us from one category of dangerous folly, false religion, into the next category of dangerous folly, accumulation of wealth with this story of a man who interrupts Jesus, who is speaking about incredibly important matters of eternal consequence, to shout out a command to Jesus to oversee that his wealth accumulation plan can be carried out. From one folly to the next then;

13 And someone in the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me."

In Israel, you will recall, that such matters of judgement between brothers initially fell upon Moses, and then when he was overwhelmed he appointed other wise men to be judges.

We can only speculate on the mans motive. My guess is this fellow is saying to himself, this Jesus is claiming to be authoritative in Israel. A new king. The Son of David. The messiah. Let's throw out a judgment call and see how He does.

If He wants to be messiah and king, he can start by adjudicating my case. Let's see what he's got. *"Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me."* I couldn't get any satisfaction from the elders in Israel, let's see what this messiah want-to-be can do for me.

He's sort of mixing up wealth and religion and politics all together here to try to get a judgement that will be for his benefit.

By the way, this is also a test for Jesus, and probably a demonic one behind the scenes. Will Jesus take the bait and show the world that His wisdom in these matters is Solomon like? That would be a step down from Son of God, to a lesser judge.

14 But He said to him, "Man, who appointed Me a judge or arbiter over you?"

We aren't dis-appointed. In this answer is a double entendre rather similar to when Jesus tells the rich young ruler, *Why do you call me good, there is no one good except God alone.*

It has that same double meaning going on. You don't realize it but you're actually speaking to the one exception to the rule. Jesus is God. That's the only version of "good" He's willing to accept. You can keep your worldly understanding of good. He won't stoop to this world's version of "good".

This is very similar. *“Man, who appointed Me a judge or arbiter over you?”* Understood from the world's point of view, I'm not going to take your case. But from God's point of view, Jesus is in fact, the single ONE who is appointed judge and arbiter over everything.

Some day all of this inheritance whether this man got it from his brother or his brother was able to keep it, all of it will go up in flames. None of it is of eternal value or consequence. It doesn't matter who has the riches, him or his brother, it's going to be burned up. Wood, hay, and stubble. No value.

And Jesus is, in fact, the one who is bringing that fire to this earth. And about 3 paragraphs from what he says in answer to this man, Jesus will in fact make that exact statement. In vs. 49 of this chapter He states it very clearly; 49 *“I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled!”*

There's the adjudication for you sir. Your request is rendered nil, because no matter if you get it or your brother keeps it, the family inheritance will perish in flames with everything else in this evil place.

So Jesus doesn't retreat to making judgement arbitrations. But He does however use this man's question as a launching point into the deeper truths of what then has eternal value.

He tells a story. Now, I just retired from my lifetime's labors 3 months ago. Exactly. So this is me. I've labored and stored up some wealth with the help

of Uncle Sam, and a little from Pam's family estate, and a too generous company using your tax dollars to fund a pension, I am able to retire and not starve.

This is really almost too close to home. Not just for me, but for a generation of baby-boomers who are all doing the same thing, and most of them before I got there. Out of all my high school buddies and pal's I was literally the last man standing. They all quit working sooner than I did.

And that's an American pre-occupation these days. The baby boomers enjoyed unprecedented accumulations of wealth and piled up gazillions of dollars in the banks and retirement funds and stocks and bonds and however else it can be counted, they piled up that wealth for this time of ease, and our government has borrowed every penny of it. Stolen? Perhaps.

All of that wealth is numbers floating in computers, who owns what, but the moment the government, who spent ALL of it on foolishness, collapses and defaults on their payments, chaos will ensue, because the money is gone. Which makes this lesson of Jesus all the more of dire importance. Dire. Listen to Jesus, you boomers!!

15 And 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."

Beware. Does that word sound familiar? It should. That's what He said 12 verses ago about the leaven of the pharisee's which is the hypocrisy of false religion. Beware.

Normally we don't use that word so much any more. We used to see a sign or two, Beware of Dog. The replacement word in our current vocabulary is probably Danger. We've got signs all over the place that alert us to "DANGER". Danger this and Danger that. The Safety people have put up so many DANGER signs we're oblivious to them. Our eyes glaze over and we don't see any of them at this point.

Jesus didn't do that. He uses that word only a few times in the New Testament. Less than 10. And when He does, it's important. Beware. It means train your attention on this one thing. Give full attention to this thing that could kill you. Jesus has just said it twice! Think maybe we should pay attention?

What is it that can kill us? Greed. Desire for wealth. False religion.

Satan doesn't really care which dead end street you land on. He has many options, tailor made for every possible personality type. False religion is one dead end street that will carry people to hell. Greed is another. The greed guy thinks the false religionist is wacko. And the false religionist thinks the greedy guy is wacko. But their particular path to hell makes perfect sense to them.

The thing about greed is the possibility is always just out of reach. Almost got it. Just a little more. And people stay on that dead end street for a lifetime. Always just right around the corner.

Actually, the guy in Jesus story is exceptional. He was there! Home free! Finally got enough, now all I need is a barn to put it in. Then, easy living. Time to take it easy. Plenty of time to sit back, relax, party, enjoy life.

False religion is black and white. This book isn't that tough. I can sit down with you and tell you why every other religion that's trying to attain God with self effort is wrong. It's all here in black and white. We can get to the bottom of that.

But greed is another animal. Greed is based in what your heart desires for you. It's a heart matter. Your heart is saying, if I just have this, then it will all be OK. If I can just attain this thing, whatever that thing is, then all will be well. And greed is particularly dangerous because it's not black and white, it's gray area.

Jesus could look inside hearts and see what was driving a person. We can't. And just in case we might venture a swing at it, that verse that every person on the planet knows better than you do will get hurled almost instantaneously. "*Judge not, lest you be judged!*" That's so ubiquitous these days people know the saying but they don't even know it originates in the Bible. And they're mis-quoting it mostly.

Paul is careful to warn us about greed. In his letter to Timothy, he reminds the younger man in ch.6: *6 But godliness actually is a means of great gain, when accompanied by contentment. 7 For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. 8 And if we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. 9 But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang.* 1 Tim. 6:6-10

Out where I worked for Sandia on the range, they were big into root cause analysis. Always having a root cause analysis.

Paul exposes a root cause analysis for us in those verses. The root cause, the thing that is the sin that sends billions of people to an eternity in hell, is that word love.

The love of money. Everything about it is connected to this perishing world. And everything about this perishing world is dis-connected from God. Love of money. Love of the things of this world that money can buy. All of it. The root cause is that word love.

Our hearts were created by God to love Him and only Him. To love this world, and it's things, is idolatry. That's why greed is so dangerous. It's equal in it's idolatry as false religion is. Both things steal your hearts desires from God and redirect them towards idols. Both are equally deadly.

Satan's business is to re-direct love and worship that belongs to the Creator

away from Him, and to anything else. He doesn't care what. Love stuff? Great. Love false gods? Great. Doesn't matter to him as long as that heart desire and love and worship goes somewhere else, anywhere else, besides the God to whom it belongs by rightful ownership.

This man who comes demanding, yes, demanding something from Jesus, the word translated *tell*, tell my brother, is an aorist imperative active verb. He's giving Jesus an order.

We can't see inside hearts, but Jesus can. We learn from Jesus response that the driver behind the command is greed. This man is greedy. He wants his brother's money. Maybe it's rightfully his, we really don't know, but what we do know is that love of that money, greed is his motivation.

15 And 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."

*for not even when one has an abundance does his **life** consist of his possessions*

The word for life is zoe. It means both physical and spiritual life. Jesus says abundance of things, abundance of stuff, big bank accounts, big retirement funds, excellent pensions, safes full of gold, whatever, stuff does not equal life.

We make that connection error too often. Stuff = life. I have enough volume in my bank account, it's going to be OK. We take the other part of the equation for granted. Of course I'm going to keep breathing and enjoy good health. I'm not worried about that. I'm only concerned with my pile of money. Health and breath and a strong beating heart are my birthright.

Jesus parable is so incredibly simple. No explanation necessary.

16 And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a certain rich man was

very productive. 17 “And he began reasoning to himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?’ 18 “And 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. 19 ‘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.”’ 20 “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?’ 21 “So is the man who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

Each and every one of us needs to stop and take a self assessment. When was the last time you honored God by thanking Him for your next breath. Your next heartbeat. Those are not your birthright. Those things belong to Him. You are His property. Whether in rebellion or in subservience and worship. You belong to Him. He owns your breaths. He owns your heart beats.

James reminds us of this, an obscure passage no one takes much thought of. James 4: 13 *Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow, we shall go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.” 14 Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. 15 Instead, you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we shall live and also do this or that.” 16 But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil. 17 Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin.*

If you think your next breath is your birthright, you think your life is **your life**, you are an evil boaster. It's sin to take your next breath for granted.

Just before those verses, James puts things straight; vs. 12 *There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy;*

Indeed, Jesus has just preceded the discussion we're considering about greed by reminding everyone; men can kill body's and that's all they can do. God can kill you and throw you into hell. 5 “*But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who after He has killed has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell*

you, fear Him!

God has the absolute right and authority to give you life and to take it away. And that's exactly what happens to the fool who thinks his next breaths for "many years" are his birthright.

19 '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."' 20 "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you;

It's fearful to think of the chaos and evil that would ensue if our economy which is a house of cards built on confidence, collapses and all of us baby boomers find out we're penniless. Anarchy and evil would overtake us. We're already seeing how fragile so-called civilization is. Ladies shoving and pushing and shouting in the supermarket over . . . toilet paper. The veneer is very thin and vanishes like a mist with something as inconsequential as toilet paper.

If the boomers retirement funds are discovered penniless, we can predict easily, all hell will break loose. We could be weeks away from that or some similar scenario.

Perhaps we christians at the very least, I know the rest of the world won't do this, but maybe us christians should re-evaluate our investment strategies and assess whether or not we're anywhere close to what Jesus describes at the end of His parable.

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

What does it mean to be rich toward God? Do we have an example of what this might look like. Anyone we could pattern ourselves after who exemplifies whatever it means to be rich toward God?

Why, yes, yes we do; Philippians 3;

17 Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. 18 For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, 19 whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things. 20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; 21 who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

I want to return at the close of our study this morning to a word Paul used when he was speaking to Timothy about guarding against love of money. Paul said godliness was a means of great gain when it is accompanied with contentment.

Contentment. Isn't that actually the bottom line. What drives people to do wacky stuff in the name of false religions? What drives people to work to exhaustion and build bigger barns and accumulate riches?

What was the motivation behind the guy who shouts out to Jesus to get him the money from his brother that he thinks should be his?

We're back to Blaise Pascal's quote which I find so useful;
“All men seek happiness. This is without exception. Whatever different means they employ, they all tend to this end. The cause of some going to war, and of others avoiding it, is the same desire in both, attended with different views. The will never takes the least step but to this object. This is the motive of every action of every man, even of those who hang themselves.”

Contentment. Happiness. It is the motivator of all decisions. And yet finding it is so elusive that men will waste lifetimes exhausting themselves trying to find it, and the emptiness remains.

Contentment, real inner peace and joy that lives outside of this world's highs and lows is what those who are rich toward God have found, in His Son, the

Lord Jesus.

Peace with God. Forgiveness of the unpayable debt of sin. Fellowship with God who gives us His Holy Spirit to quicken us from spiritual death to life as the downpayment of unspeakable riches He will give us in the next world, not this one.

For those of us who know the Saviour, all of the stuff of this world, is superflous. It's nice, but it isn't where my contentment is seated. The greatest contentment I have ever experienced in this world is connected to the greatest times of worship experienced.

That's Jesus lesson brought about by this shouting man. This worlds riches and goods are a false premise. This life is 5 minutes long. You don't know when God will give you your final breath. But when He does, you will face Him as judge. When that happens, there's only one safe place, and it's also the place where joy and contentment in this world are realized. In Christ.