

Luke 12:13-34

"Be Rich Toward God"

August 3, 2025

1. Intro

- a. Here in the United States, we face a rapidly growing division, in MANY different areas...
 - i. We could talk about the division between Republicans and Democrats,
 - 1. As the chasm between these two parties has become almost insurmountable over the past decade
 - ii. We could talk about the division in ethnicities,
 - 1. As so many of our fears have been stoked this past year by the whole immigration debate
 - iii. We could bring it closer to home, and talk about the division in the Church,
 - 1. As this last couple of years has seen major splits in both the Presbyterian and the Methodist denominations over gender and homosexuality
 - a. And growing rifts even within our own Southern Baptist denomination over allowing women to be pastors
 - iv. We could certainly talk about the division that exists in all of those areas...
 - 1. But this morning, our focus is on a different division
 - a. One that doesn't always get as much attention
 - b. But one that is quietly and quickly happening within just about every community
 - i. And that is the growing gap between the rich and the poor

b. Statistics

- i. According to the World Inequality Database, the top 10% of Americans now control over 71% of the country's total wealth...
 - 1. One of the highest levels of wealth inequality seen all around the world
 - a. This is seen most strikingly in our stock market, as Forbes.com reported that as of 2023, this same 10% owned a record amount of 93% of all US stocks
 - i. That's shot up from 81% just 10 years ago
 - ii. While at the same time, the bottom half of the US population owns less than 1% of all the stocks and mutual fund shares
 - b. To put it into real dollar amounts, the richest 1% of our population controls \$25 TRILLION in stock wealth
 - i. That is almost HALF of the value of the entire stock market
 - 1. While nearly 50% of our population owns less than 1%
 - c. I know its hard to register these numbers in our heads sometimes
 - i. But just imagine that I had \$10,000 to give out to the church, and we were having a really great morning where a hundred people showed up
 - 1. If we distributed this \$10,000 in the same way that the stock market is currently distributed,
 - a. One of you would come out GREAT with around \$5000 in your pocket
 - i. But half of you – 50 people out of a hundred – would only walk away with a hundred dollar bill
 - d. The difference is STAGGERING, especially when we're throwing around TRILLIONS of dollars

2. Forbes also reports that the median retirement savings for half of all Americans is ZERO dollars
 - a. Yes, you heard that right...
 - i. Half of our nation has ZERO dollars to put toward their retirement
 - ii. While the top 10% of our population has a median of over \$600,000 in their retirement savings
3. Elderly Americans currently live in one the highest poverty rates out of all the developed countries in the world
 - a. With nearly a quarter of all Americans 66 years and older living at or below the poverty level
4. And when you look across the different ethnic populations, the numbers get even worse
 - a. The median income for white households in America today is about \$123,000
 - i. While the median income for Hispanic American households is only \$36,000
 - ii. And the median income for African American households is a meager \$24,000
- ii. The gap between the rich and the poor is quietly getting bigger and bigger as each year goes by
 1. And more and more people are falling into poverty each year, while the rich get more and more wealth and power and control
 - a. These are not political talking points... these are very real numbers, representing very real families
 - i. And what Jesus is going to teach us here this morning is that there are great problems at BOTH ends of the spectrum
 1. We're going to cover a big portion of Luke chapter 12 this morning
 2. But I think its important that we look at all of this in one setting,
 - a. As Jesus presents to us two great problems, and one great solution
2. The first great problem he addresses, is the problem of wealth
 - a. Luke 12:13 starts as someone in the crowd says to Jesus,
 - i. ¹³*"Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me."*
 1. If you remember from the past couple of weeks, Jesus and his disciples are standing in the midst of a crowd of nearly 10,000 people
 - a. We saw two weeks ago that Jesus chose this moment to warn his disciples against the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy
 - b. And we saw last week that he then warned them of the coming persecution they would experience because they were his disciples
 2. But then, some random guy interjects with his own agenda
 - a. Apparently, he wasn't interested in Jesus' words about the Pharisees
 - i. He didn't care that Jesus was talking to his disciples about the fact that they would very soon be brought on trial before the religious leaders in Israel
 - ii. He didn't even seem interested in seeing a bunch of signs and wonders like the crowds typically wanted to see
 - b. This guy had one thing on his mind... he had some money coming to him,
 - i. And his brother was keeping it from him

1. So he calls out to Jesus, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me!"
- b. And Jesus replies in verse 14,
- i. ¹⁴"Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?"
 1. Now, it's impossible to know what Jesus' tone of voice was when I said this...
 - a. But if I was in Jesus' place, I would have been a little annoyed at this man
 - i. In the middle of a pretty profound teaching moment, you're asking ME to settle an argument between you and your brother
 - ii. That has absolutely NOTHING to do with what I was just talking to my disciples about
 1. And it has NOTHING to do with why I am here
 - a. Can't you figure these things out for yourselves??
 - iii. Well, thankfully I am NOT in Jesus' place... he probably handled it with more compassion and patience than I would have had
 - b. And so Jesus shifts his attention away from his disciples
 - i. And, while he doesn't address this man's demand, he does choose to turn this moment into a very valuable lesson for everyone
- c. In verse 15, Jesus turns to the crowd and says to them,
- i. ¹⁵"Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."
- d. And then he tells them this parable, starting in verse 16...
- i. ¹⁶"The land of a rich man produced plentifully, ¹⁷and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' ¹⁸And 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. ¹⁹And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.'" ²⁰But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' ²¹So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."
1. Now, the first thing we have to acknowledge about this parable... if we're willing to be honest with ourselves...
 - a. Is that this rich man really doesn't seem all that bad, does he?
 - i. I mean, couldn't we say that he's literally living out the American dream?
 1. His farming business had taken off and become extremely successful
 2. He was able to tear down his old worn out warehouses, and build brand new ones that were big and spacious
 3. He built up a really nice retirement for himself
 4. And then he finally got to relax and enjoy all his hard-earned rewards
 - a. Back to the statistics we talked about a few minutes ago, this guy would have been in that 1% that made it to the top
 - i. He had achieved EXACTLY what most of us here in America desire to achieve in OUR lives
 2. But Jesus holds this man up, in all of his success and achievement and wealth...
 - a. And he says to the crowd, that God considers this man a FOOL
 - i. For that very night, his life would end

1. His soul would go to be before the Lord, where he would await the judgment of the Lord
2. And everything he had worked so hard to amass for himself in this world...
 - a. All the treasures...
 - b. All the comforts...
 - c. All the abundance of his possessions...
 - i. It would ALL go to someone else
- ii. As I've heard another pastor say, all the things we are spending so much time and money to get for ourselves...
 1. It will ALL one day be sold in yard sales or buried in a landfill
 - a. How foolish indeed, is it to lay up treasure for ourselves here on earth
 - i. And not be rich toward God
- ii. This is the great problem of wealth, my friends
 1. There never really is enough, is there?
 - a. I would imagine that, if this fictional man in Jesus' parable had continued to live a long and prosperous live
 - i. There probably would have come a day when he would look at his big and spacious barns and say,
 1. "You know what, I think I need EVEN BIGGER barns now... THEN I'll finally relax and eat and drink and be merry"
 - ii. We see this all the time in the remodeling business
 1. I can't tell you the number of absolutely beautiful kitchens we have torn out of people's homes, because they just needed something a little bigger... a little newer... a little more up-to-date
- iii. When we choose to chase after treasures on this earth, those treasures eventually become all-consuming
 1. And the dangers of these things is very real
 - a. This is why Paul says in 1 Timothy 6:9-10,
 - i. *⁹But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.*
 - b. That's a sobering passage for us in our culture today, isn't it
 - i. Paul says that the desire to be rich opens the door to temptation
 1. It leads our hearts toward senseless and harmful desires
 2. It plunges us into ruin and destruction
 - a. And the great danger for us here in the church, is that it can eventually cause us to walk away from the faith
 - iv. The love of money is the root of all kinds of evils
 1. So friends, take care, and be on your guard against ALL covetousness
 - a. Be on your guard against the thoughts of, "If I just had a bigger barn like THAT guy, THEN I would be happy..."
 - b. Be on your guard against the thoughts of, "If my retirement fund could be as big as HER retirement fund, THEN I could relax and be at peace in my mind..."

- c. Be on your guard against the thoughts of, “If I could just get a LITTLE closer to that top 10% of our population, THEN I could finally be content”
 - i. Brothers and sisters, these are all snares that can quickly entangle the desires and affections of our heart
 - 1. And these are the snares can quickly choke out our faith, and cause us to wander away from Christ
 - d. This was where the church in Laodicea had ended up in the days that John was given his revelation on the Island of Patmos
 - i. In Revelation 3, verses 15-17, Jesus says to this body of professing believers...
 - 1. *¹⁵“I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! ¹⁶So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. ¹⁷For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.”*
 - v. This is the great danger for all who would lay up treasure for themselves, and not be rich toward God
 - 1. You may have all sorts of new and beautiful and shiny treasures, but on the inside, they will leave you wretched and pitiable and poor
 - a. As Jesus said in Mark 8:36,
 - i. *³⁶“For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?”*
- 3. But there is a second problem that Jesus then exposes, and that is the problem that comes to those who DO NOT have wealth
 - a. Jesus turns back to his disciples in verse 22, and he says to them,
 - i. *²²Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on. ²³For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. ²⁴Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! ²⁵And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁶If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest? ²⁷Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ²⁸But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! ²⁹And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. ³⁰For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them. ³¹Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you.*
 - b. Our wealth can very quickly become a snare that leads us into temptations and away from the faith
 - i. But Jesus ALSO teaches that our lack of wealth can lead us into the sins of anxiety and worry
 - 1. This is where many of us live in our hearts, isn't it?
 - a. The majority of us don't have enough wealth to tear down our barns and build bigger and better barns
 - b. The majority of us don't have enough in our retirement funds to where we can just sit back and relax and enjoy the abundance of our possessions
 - c. The majority of us are faced with the reality of clothes that are NOT always new, pantries that are NOT always filled with food, and bills that are NOT always easy to pay

- i. We find ourselves much closer to the masses that live in poverty in our land, than to the few who live in luxury
 - 1. And therefore, we DO get anxious about our life, don't we?
 - 2. We DO worry about our finances, and our clothes and our groceries
 - 3. We DO get stressed out about all of these things
 - ii. And Jesus says to us who are faced with these daily concerns...
 - 1. Do not be anxious about ANY of it!
 - a. Have you seen the ravens and the other birds?
 - i. Do you see them building storehouses or barns?
 - 1. I mean, that sounds like a silly question until you stop and think about the fact that birds actually CAN build structures, can't they?
 - a. They build nests to sleep in, and to protect their young
 - b. Some birds even build their own bird houses made from mud
 - i. So couldn't they ALSO build additional nests and mud houses to store all their extra food?
 - ii. Sure they could!
 - c. But they DON'T – because GOD gives them what they need to survive each day
 - 2. And Jesus says to us, "How much more valuable to God are you, friends, than the birds of the air?"
 - b. Or have you gone out and looked at the flowers of the field?
 - i. Not even Solomon, in all of his riches and wealth and glory was clothed as beautifully as these fields are
 - 1. But the flowers don't toil
 - 2. The grass doesn't spin or work to cover itself with such beauty
 - ii. It is GOD who clothes the fields, even though they are only green for a season
 - 1. And Jesus says to us, "How much more will your Father clothe YOU, O you of little faith!"
 - c. Do you not believe that your Father KNOWS what you need?
 - d. Do you not believe that your Father will PROVIDE everything you need?
 - iii. This is why we MUST acknowledge that worry and anxiety over all of these things is actually a sin that we need to confess
 - 1. When we are anxious about our life and our bodies and our food and our clothes, it reveals how small our faith truly is
 - a. It reveals that we don't TRULY believe that God is SOVEREIGN over His creation
 - b. But, even worse, it reveals that we don't TRULY believe that God CARES for His children
 - i. My friends, look at the birds of the air!
 - ii. Look at the lilies in the field!
 - c. If God takes such tender and intentional care of all of that, will he not also take care of YOU who have been made in His very own image?
 - i. Those who have great wealth in this world are in danger of walking away from the faith, because they believe they have all that they need without God

- ii. But those who do not have great wealth in this world are in danger of losing their faith, because they don't believe that God is big enough to meet their needs
 - 2. These are the two great problems that EVERY SINGLE ONE OF US are faced with, as the rich get richer, and the poor get poorer
 - a. But thankfully, Jesus provides the one great solution to both of these problems
- 4. As he says in verse 31,
 - a. "Instead..."
 - i. Instead of building bigger and better barns...
 - ii. Instead of striving after a strong and robust 401K...
 - iii. Instead of worrying and being anxious about your life...
 - 1. Instead of all these things, SEEK YOUR FATHER'S KINGDOM, and he will make sure you have EXACTLY what you need
 - a. This is the antidote to the greed that exists in many of our hearts
 - b. This is the antidote to the anxiety that exists in all the rest of our hearts
 - 2. Let go of the earthly kingdom that all the nations of the world are seeking after,
 - a. And instead, seek after GOD'S Kingdom
 - i. And here's the great thing...
 - 1. This isn't a Kingdom that we have to try to find like some difficult and grueling treasure hunt
- 5. Jesus says in verse 32,
 - a. ³²*"Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."*
 - i. Isn't that a wonderful encouragement?!
 - 1. It gets EVEN MORE encouraging when you look at the original Greek language that Jesus was speaking in
 - a. We read verses 31 and 32 like this is a conditional promise that awaits us in the future...
 - i. "Seek the Kingdom of God, and he will be happy to give it to you"
 - b. But in the original Greek, the tense of this sentence is actually in the PAST tense, NOT the future tense
 - i. So the BETTER way to read this verse is
 - 1. "Fear not, little flock, for the Father took great delight in ALREADY giving you the Kingdom!"
 - c. Friends, if you are truly in Christ Jesus, then the Kingdom has ALREADY been given to you
 - i. And your Father took GREAT delight in giving it to you!
 - 2. This was what Paul absolutely gloried in in the first chapter of Ephesians
 - a. In the longest run-on sentence in the Bible, Paul goes on for eleven verses, extolling the greatness of God, the excellence of Christ, and the wonders of our salvation
 - i. And in verse 11, Paul says that,
 - 1. ¹¹*In [Christ] we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works ALL things according to the counsel of HIS will*
 - ii. Paul was able to exalt in the inheritance that he had ALREADY obtained
 - 1. Because this was what God has PREDESTINED for ALL who put their hope in Christ

- a. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit took counsel among themselves before the world was even formed
 - b. They established this plan for the fullness of time that would be set forth in Christ
 - c. And God the Father took great delight in giving YOU, Christians, the inheritance of HIS Kingdom
 - 2. And then Paul said that God has sealed us with the Holy Spirit, as the GUARANTEE of our inheritance
 - b. Fear not, little flock, for your Father decided ALL of this long before you were even born!
 - 3. If you think back to the original demand given to Jesus at the beginning of our passage, how small was the lens this man was looking through!
 - a. He was worried about getting his earthly inheritance from his brother
 - i. But Jesus shows us that we have inherited an entire KINGDOM!
- b. Friends, it is so very important that we know and understand these truths, for in these truths we are freed up to truly live as we are meant to live
 - i. In the context of our finances, Jesus says tells us, "It was your Father's great pleasure to give you His Kingdom, so..."
 - 1. *³³Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. ³⁴For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*
 - a. Do you find yourself in a place of wealth, Christian?
 - i. Then sell your possessions, and give to those who are in need
 - 1. For life does not consist in the abundance of your possessions
 - ii. Don't spend your life chasing the treasures of this world
 - 1. All those things can be stolen by thieves or eaten by moths
 - 2. Barns grow old and fall apart
 - 3. Retirement funds can vanish overnight if the economy crashes
 - 4. You could gain the entire world, and still lose your soul
 - iii. So REST, Christian, in the knowledge that your Father knows everything you need, and he has ALREADY given you His Kingdom
 - 2. Do you see the freedom that could be yours?
 - a. We heard earlier Paul's warnings to those who desire to be rich
 - i. But then he goes on and gives these instructions to those who ARE rich
 - 1. And let me pause for a moment and clarify something, being rich or being poor is all relative, isn't it?
 - a. Most of us may not be "rich" when we compare ourselves to the extravagantly wealthy in our nation
 - b. But we are certainly rich when we compare ourselves to those who are living in utter poverty right here in our own communities
 - i. We are certainly rich when we compare ourselves to the millions who are living in slums in third world countries all over the world
 - ii. So don't hear these words from Paul as words meant for the Bill Gates and Elon Musks of this world

1. Hear these words as they are meant for ALL OF US who live in relative ease and comfort...
 - a. Paul says in 1 Timothy 6:17-19,
 - i. *¹⁷As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. ¹⁸They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, ¹⁹thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.*
- iii. My friends, if you are clinging to your riches here in this world, then you will be unable to take hold of that which is truly life!
 1. So don't be haughty about your finances
 - a. This was the problem with the rich man in Jesus' parable, wasn't it?
 - i. Jesus started the parable by saying that "THE LAND of a rich man produced plentifully..."
 1. The clear inference we are to make from the following verses is that it was GOD who was behind all of that plentiful production
 - ii. But the rich man was all about MY crops, and MY grains, and MY goods
 1. And in his haughtiness, he kept it all to himself
 - a. So don't be haughty in your finances
 2. And don't set your hopes on the UNCERTAINTY of riches
 - a. For that matter, don't set your hopes on the uncertainty of your entire life
 - i. Your soul could be required of you this very night
 1. So instead, be rich in good works
 2. Be generous and ready to share
 3. Store up treasure for yourself as a good foundation for the OTHER side of eternity
 - a. THIS is how we take hold of that which is TRULY life!
 - iv. And again, we find the freedom to live this life of radical generosity, free from worry and anxiety, when we understand that our Father took great delight in giving US His Kingdom!
 - c. But we can expand this freedom out into other areas besides just our finances, can't we?
6. Flip over in your Bibles to Matthew, chapter 5
 - a. In Matthew five, as Jesus begins his Sermon on the Mount, he opens his sermon with the Beatitudes
 - i. We've talked about it before, but it's crucial for us to say again
 1. The Beatitudes are not rungs of a ladder that we can use to climb up to heaven
 - a. These are the marks of those who are ALREADY disciples
 - i. These things aren't just difficult for man to achieve on his own – apart from the Holy Spirit, they are IMPOSSIBLE
 2. Now, if we read this passage as having eight beatitudes, with verses 10-12 meant to be read together as the last beatitude, then we see that Jesus bookended the Beatitudes with the very same promise...
 - a. The promise of the Kingdom
 - i. Verse 3,
 1. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."
 - ii. Verse 10,

1. "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."
- b. Jesus takes all of these things, and he wraps them all up together in Kingdom language
 - i. And by doing so, he points us toward the freedom that we can walk in knowing that God took great delight in giving us this Kingdom
 1. Because of the Kingdom that has been given to you, you are free to be poor in spirit
 - a. You can be broken and contrite in your spirit, as you freely confess your sin before God, for your sin has been forgiven in Christ
 2. Because of the Kingdom that has been given to you, you can be free to mourn over sin in this life,
 - a. For there will come a day when you will be comforted
 3. Because of the Kingdom that has been given to you, you are free to be meek and humble and lowly and gentle,
 - a. For you will indeed inherit the earth when Christ returns and makes all things new
 4. Because of the Kingdom that has been given to you, you are free to hunger and thirst after righteousness,
 - a. For God has given you everything you need for that hunger and thirst to be satisfied
 - i. He's given you His Word to feast on
 - ii. He's given you His Spirit to drink freely from
 - iii. He's given you a church to feast alongside of
 - b. You are free to hunger and thirst for righteousness, Christians, for you will be satisfied
 5. Because of the Kingdom that has been given to you, you are free to show mercy to those who do not deserve it
 - a. For mercy was shown to YOU in allowing YOU into the Kingdom
 6. Because of the Kingdom that has been given to you, you are free to pursue purity in every aspect of your heart,
 - a. For God will once again dwell with man in the New Jerusalem
 7. Because of the Kingdom that has been given to you, you are free to be a peacemaker
 - a. You are free from a life of bitterness and unforgiveness
 - b. You are free from a life of vengeance and retribution
 - c. You are free to live at peace with EVERYONE, as far as it depends on you
 - i. For your Father is the very God of all Creation
 1. And through Christ, you who were once enemies of God, are now at peace with God
 8. And finally, because of the Kingdom that has already been given to you, you are free to endure persecution
 - a. You are free to rejoice when others revile you and persecute you
 - b. You are free to be glad when they utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on account of the name of Jesus
 - i. As we heard last week...
 1. The worst thing they can do to you is take your life
 2. So rejoice in your freedom as you are persecuted for righteousness sake
 - a. For great is your reward in heaven!
 - ii. Brothers and sisters in Christ, the freedom to live as God has called us to live, whether it is in regard to our finances or our love for Him or our love for our neighbor...

1. Is found in this one glorious truth
 - a. The Father was GREATLY delighted when chose to give YOU the Kingdom
 - i. So fear not, little flock
 - ii. Don't be anxious about your life
 - iii. And be rich toward God, as you live your life walking in the freedom found in His commands !