

SERMON FOR JULY 31, 2022

TEXT: LUKE 12: 13-21

THEME: WHAT A FOOL BELIEVES

**13** Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." **14** But he said to him, "Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?" **15** And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." **16** And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man produced plentifully, **17** and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' **18** And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. **19** And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry." **20** But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' **21** So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."

It has been over 20 years since Joseph Boskin, professor of history at Boston University, explained the origin of April Fool's Day. According to Professor Boskin, April Fool's Day began when the Roman Emperor Constantine was receiving some harsh criticism from inside and outside his court. The emperor, best known for having bestowed imperial favor upon Christianity, became upset when his court jesters gave their own critical comments.

When one of the jesters said he could do a better job of running the empire, Constantine took him up on the offer. He allowed a jester by the name of Kugel to be emperor for one day: April first. The professor explained, "Now, in those times fools were really wise men. It was the role of court jesters to put things into perspective by using humor." During his brief 24-hour rule, Kugel passed an edict calling for everyone to indulge in great jocularly and asked all the empire's citizenry to play the part of the fool. According to the professor, the custom caught on, and April Fool's Day became an annual event.

Back in 1983, this news item was carried by a major news agency and was printed in

many newspapers across America. But then, the bombshell. On April 2nd in 1983, Professor Boskin confessed that he had made the whole thing up as his April Fool's Day joke upon the press. His is a good-natured April Fool's Day joke.

All of us probably have at some time played an April Fool's Joke on someone or have been the recipient of an April Fool's Joke. While it is humorous to play a joke or prank on someone, the one thing you don't want to do is play the fool toward God. That is the point of our text for today, the Parable of the Rich Fool.

One day Jesus was speaking to a crowd, and someone came up to him asking Jesus to settle a dispute. "Tell my brother to give me a share of the inheritance." We all know how inheritances work, and how this can divide families, especially when family members love the possessions more than the members of the family. Instead of inserting Himself into this dispute, Jesus tells a parable. It goes like this: "What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?" **18** And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. **19** And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry." **20** But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be? **21** So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.'

The point? It is simply this: "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions. Don't play the part of a fool towards God, because life is more than what you own or what you have, life is all about loving God first and foremost.

What does the fool believe? Well, to begin with, the fool says in his heart that God doesn't exist. Well that excludes each of us right? Not so fast! For the fool believes that life

consists only in stuff, in things, in accumulating things in life, in fulfilling one's desires and being pleased in one's life. And so the fool wants to accumulate more money, do whatever it takes to get ahead, have the best of everything, so much so that the fool never has enough. The fool puts his trust in what he has, and what he wants, and forgets about God. In fact, God takes the back seat. So life, and how you live your life becomes all about fulfilling your desires.

God warns in the First Commandment and says: You shall have no other gods. Luther writes: We should fear, love and trust in God about all things. You play the part of the fool when the things of life become more important than God. When your needs and your desires supersede God's will for you. "But Pastor, Sunday is the only day I have for myself. I need to get my rest." And so you set aside God and what He says in His Word, telling you not to forsake the assembly of the saints.

But God also says in the ninth and tenth commandments, you shall not covet. But you do covet, when you are more concerned about what is in your savings or retirement account instead of sharing what God has given to you with those in need. The return on your investments is more important than the salvation of souls. Or the purchase of a new car or some type of new technology is more important than the expansion of God's Kingdom.

Make no mistake, money, material goods are not in and of themselves evil. The Bible says that it is the love of money that is the root of all evil. You can't serve God and mammon, for your heart will love one thing and hate the others. You can't serve two masters. Either God is first and foremost in your life, or something else is.

The fool believes that he can get away with having other things more important than God. But God says no. He calls the sinner to repentance. He calls you to repentance. God today calls you to turn from your love of things, your love of the world, your love for the creation and instead turn to God for forgiveness.

This is why God so loved the world that He sent Jesus into the world. Jesus was no fool. He didn't deny God or His existence, because He, Jesus, is very really God's Son in human flesh. He was sent from heaven to love the Lord God with all of His heart, mind and strength, something that God requires of you but you are incapable of doing. Jesus lived His life for you, for Jesus' purpose in His life was to do the will of God the Heavenly Father who sent Him into the world. And Jesus loved His Father perfectly, so much so, that He gave Himself in love for those around Him. Look at the Gospels and you see that Jesus is continually doing things for people: healing the sick, raising the dead, feeding the hungry, giving hope to the hopeless, and proclaiming God's Good News of forgiveness to broken and contrite sinners.

But Jesus didn't just talk about forgiveness and hope, He gave His life unto death on the cross so that you would be forgiven and have hope in your time of need. He lived the life you can't live and died the death you deserve. In Jesus God has given to you forgiveness and hope, He has blessed you by adopting you into His family in the waters of your Baptism. He comes to you today in, with, and under the bread and wine so that you might taste and see the forgiveness God has for you. Jesus invites you to believe in Him, to trust in Him, for in doing so you save yourself from God's wrath and are secure in His love, now and into the future. God rescues you from His wrath for He has called you to be His own so that you will live under God's guidance in your life. You can be confident that when your day comes to

meet your Maker, and that day comes for all of us, by God's grace through faith in Jesus God will welcome you into His heavenly Mansions prepared for His own.

You should know, however, that your faith in Jesus would be met with disdain by many today. So many live their lives too busy to take a few hours each week to learn about Jesus. They have their own issues, so they don't want to hear how God was in Christ making friends with the world. They are too involved in trying to get ahead, to keep up with the Jones, to take care of themselves and to get bigger and better stuff in this life that they forget and neglect to prepare for the next life. They are just like the rich man, who was all about building bigger storehouses for his crops. The rich man lived the part of a fool because when it was his time to die, and make no mistake, all will die, he missed going to heaven. And that is why God says to the man: "You Fool!" But this story, and the message of Jesus' love are considered foolishness to the wise and wealthy today. "You are a fool to believe in the Bible," they say.

But listen to what the Apostle Paul says. The wisdom of the world has always said that you are a fool to believe in Jesus. Paul writes: "**18** For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? **21** For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. (That is why) we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, **24** but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. **25** For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength. **27** But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God

chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. **28** God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, **29** so that no one may boast before him. **30** It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.” ( **1 Corinthians 1: 18-30**).

King Solomon has been considered the wisest man on the face of the earth. In his life Solomon accumulated much wealth and had many material possessions. But at the end of his life, Solomon realized that he was a fool to place his trust in things, in living a life of pleasure, at the expense of believing in Christ and living for God. For Solomon had it all, he tried it all, and in the end, it was all for nothing. So what did Solomon conclude at the end of his life?

The words of the wise are given by One Shepherd, Jesus. And what is our purpose in life? Not to accumulate stuff, but to trust in Christ. As Solomon writes: “Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. **14** For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.” “**2** Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. **3** For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. **4** When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”

Amen