

Film: *a few weeks later*
Parable: The Rich Fool
Scripture: Luke 12:16-21

Interpreting

'a few weeks later'

Where is the parable in this film? 'A few weeks later' is the story of the Rich Fool after the death, so it's told somewhat in retrospect. Based on a true story, a woman has acquired an immense amount of clothing that she never wore. This is not the same old attack on women have too many clothes; this is a story of woman who owns countless things she has merely stored up. The tags are still on the clothing. She has died and left behind her husband to empty her "barns" so to speak. He is processing the parable vicariously.



Cultural Background

The context of Jesus' parable is a dispute between 2 brothers. Jewish law said that the eldest brother was to get a double share of the father's inheritance, while the rest of the money was to be split between the remaining brothers. We don't really know for sure, but it might be a case here where a younger brother feels ripped off in the inheritance division, so he's hoping Jesus will publicly side with him. From Jesus' perspective, this guy is trying to make this a "fairness" issue, when in reality it's about greed – the desire for more stuff. So he calls a spade a spade. In essence he says – "quit acting like you don't care about stuff when you do everything you can to acquire it." "A man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." This is where we get confused; we do not know the meaning of the word "enough." Most of us have more than enough, but we pretend that it's unfair that we don't have more. Such pretense is a bunker for our covetousness.

Discussion Questions

- 1) Where in life do you feel ripped off?
 - 2) What would change in your life if you stopped acquiring once you really had "enough"?
 - 3) How do we know when we have enough?
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Application

The ancient Epicurians had a well known philosophy in Jesus' day – “eat, drink, and be merry”. For them the 20th century bumper sticker got it right: “he who dies with the most toys –wins”. Jesus' parable about the rich fool is a cautionary tale for all of us who think that consumption defines life. People in the west claim that they don't believe this, but our lifestyles betray us. Americans are currently buried under a mountain of consumer debt (over 2 trillion in 2001). Even personally, the average household carries a consumer debt of 12,000, and a credit card debt of 8000.00. 60% of us spend more each year than we have coming in! No wonder Jesus found that covetousness (the desire for more stuff) is something we must be on “guard against”. We give lip service to the phrase – “you can't take it with you,” but in reality we stuff our barns as full as we can get them.



Discussion Questions

- 1) Where do you see the priorities of your neighbors – stuff...or wisdom?
- 2) Why do we all try to deny our “covetousness”?
- 3) What % of your stuff could we throw out before you would miss it?

Application (cont'd)

In this parable, a rich man, decides he's worked hard for his “stuff” and now he deserves a little rest and relaxation. Finally, after all his hard work – it's time to live a little. So he enlarges his storage capacity, under the misguided assumption that it's enough for the long haul. What he doesn't know is that his time is up. Hit by a truck...drowned in a lake...shot in a drive-by...suffocated by lung cancer – Jesus doesn't say how he died that night, only that his time was up. This is the problem with Epicurianism, we never know when the sand will run out of our hourglass.

The question of this parable is – How then shall we live?

Jesus' answer = “be rich toward God”. Spend as much time and energy acquiring wisdom from God as we spend accumulating “stuff.” Live your life as though tomorrow may, indeed, be your final day.

Discussion Questions

- 1) What would change for you if you knew the hourglass was going to run out tomorrow?
 - 2) Do you know anyone who has lived out this philosophy successfully?
 - 3) What would it look like to be “rich towards God”?
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