



Roanoke, Virginia

April 26, 2026

## *“Fool’s Sight”*

*Luke 12:13-22*

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Before I read the parable of our passage, I want to take you to another book of the Bible that is in the background of this story—*Ecclesiastes*.

*Ecclesiastes* is written by someone referred to as Qoheleth, which means “teacher,” or “preacher.” He is a person of faith... but it is a tired faith. The faith of someone who knows who God is... but has lost touch with *why* it matters.

He has lived long enough to feel like he has seen *everything*. The world goes in circles. “**What has been is what will be. There is nothing new under the sun.**”

So what do you do?

- You live as best you can.
- You follow the rules.
- You try to be a decent human being.

And then, when you’ve met those marks... you eat, drink, and be merry—because today is all you can count on.

We would still call Qoheleth a person of faith.

But what would we say of the person in our parable?

Luke 12:13-22:

<sup>13</sup> Someone in the crowd said to him, “**Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.**” <sup>14</sup> But he said to him, “**Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?**” <sup>15</sup> And he said to them, “**Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.**” <sup>16</sup> Then he told them a parable: “**The**



land of a rich man produced abundantly. <sup>17</sup> And he thought to himself, 'What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?' <sup>18</sup> Then he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. <sup>19</sup> And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.' <sup>20</sup> But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' <sup>21</sup> So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God."

<sup>22</sup> He said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear.."

You know how an hourglass works.

Two identical bulbs, connected by a narrow neck. All the sand sits in one until you turn it over. Then it flows into the other.

- Same shape,
- Same structure,
  - just reversed.

Tom Long suggests that two of of Jesus' parables work like that— like an hourglass you can flip. On one side, you have the Parable of the Prodigal Son. On the other, the Rich Fool- the parable we just heard.

At first, they don't seem to have much in common. But turn the hourglass over and you begin to see it.

In both parables, there is a request.

- In the Prodigal, the younger son asks for his inheritance early—and the father says, "Yes."
- In the Rich Fool, a man asks Jesus to settle an inheritance dispute—and Jesus says "No." (He may not have known the word *triangulate*, but he knew better than to do it.)

Then comes a crisis.

- In the Prodigal, the crisis is *scarcity*. The son makes bad choices and nothing is left.
- In the Rich Fool, the crisis is *abundance*. The rich man has so much he needs to build bigger barns.

Then comes that moment: "What am I going to do?"

- The Prodigal comes to himself and wonders if he can return home.
- The Rich Fool turns inward... starts talking to himself.

In both stories, there is a kind of blessing.

- In one, the father throws a party for his son—robe, ring, music, feast.



- In the other, the man throws a party for himself:  
“Soul, you have ample goods... so now relax..., eat, drink, and be merry.”

Finally, there is judgment.

- In the Prodigal, the father declares: “This son was lost and now is found.”
- In the other, God says: “You fool. This very night your life is required of you.”

Same structure.

Same movement.

But one story opens outward into grace...  
and the other collapses inward on itself.

Like a good hourglass, the two parables balance each other.

But, in the life of the church, one has received far more attention than the other.

And of course it has. Who wouldn't rather dwell on a story where judgment ends in grace...than one where it ends in death?

Then again, maybe there is another reason we don't linger here. We think we already have this parable figured out.

It is a morality tale,

an example of how not to live.

A story about a terrible person-

someone who collects luxury cars while not paying child support.

One of those eccentric billionaires who isolates himself in a huge, empty mansion  
and talks to his portrait.

Hoard his stuff,

congratulates himself on his wealth,

and when the sentence of death is announced by God,

we nod.

“He had it coming.”

But if that's what we hear, we haven't really heard this parable. This man is not all that different than us.

He has a good year. What's wrong with that?

He has the kind of year we all would like to have. Right? The market breaks his way. The crop comes in strong. He has more than he knows what to do with.

So, he plans. He saves. He prepares for more.

And if that is a problem, then most of us are in trouble. Because don't we all want what he has?

- Security.



- Stability.
- A sense that we're finally ahead,
  - not dependent on the next paycheck to cover today's debts.

If planning for the future is the issue, then please... don't tell God about my retirement plan.

The problem is not that the man has too much.

*The problem is that he cannot imagine his life with God in it.*

He has what you might call an *Ecclesiastes Urgency*.

Life is short.

Enjoy what you have.

Eat, drink, be merry because tomorrow is not guaranteed

What he lacks is *Kingdom Urgency*. The sense that God is present— right now— and that life is something to be lived *with* God, within God's will, not just enjoyed *apart* from God.

*That* is the problem.

From the man's perspective, God exists— just not here.

- Not in his barns.
- Not in his decisions.
- Not in his imagination.

God exists, he has needed God when things were scarce, but God isn't needed now.

- The man has it covered,
  - so God isn't needed.
- He has enough,
  - so he doesn't need God's blessings.
- He has a plan,
  - so he doesn't need God's guidance.

So, imagine his shock when God who is no where near... speaks.

This is the only parable Jesus tells where God has a speaking part. But how wonderful God has a line in this story where the rich man lives as if there is no God. God who is not there... *is there*, and calls him a fool, which is a clear reference to Psalm 14:1: **"The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.'**" This man, who no doubt would call on God in scarcity, has forgotten to call on God in abundance.

Let me say this as simply as I can about our parable. The problem is not that the man had a good year. The problem is that he could not imagine that his life still belonged to God.

And so his world shrank... *to himself*.



But when God is present— really present— everything changes.

- Abundance becomes opportunity.
- Resources become relationships.
- And life becomes something to give... not just something to store.

So I encourage you—

- to be good people,
- to do your best,
- to rest when you need it
  - And eat, drink and be merry when it's time to enjoy the party.

But when you do all this, don't think you've arrived. Let your imagination continue to be shaped by God.

- To see your life, your time, your resources as part of what God is doing—right now.

Because this day your life is required of you.

This day and every day,  
your life is required of you.

Isn't that wonderful?

-that God is not waiting at the end to take your life—

-that God is claiming your life now,

inviting you into the joy of joining who you are and what you have  
to what God is doing in the world.

