

TELL ME THE STORIES OF JESUS

Priority

July 31, 2022

Overarching Theme: 2022 – *The Year of the Lord's Favor* (Luke 4:19)

Instructions:

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. *The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.*

Core Point:

As the world awakens from 2 years of pandemic stupor, the words of Jesus proclaiming "the year of the Lord's favor" is a message whose time has come. This passage from Luke 4 harkens back to the 'year of jubilee' of Leviticus 25 and Isaiah 61, a year of a fresh start, a clean slate and reset for everyone who can envision new *possibilities* with God this Lenten season and always.

Reflect on this Scripture:

Luke 12:13-21 NRSV

¹³ Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me." ¹⁴ But he said to him, "Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?" ¹⁵ 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." ¹⁶ Then he told them a parable: "The land of a rich man produced abundantly. ¹⁷ And he thought to himself, 'What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?' ¹⁸ 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. 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, 'You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' ²¹ So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God."

Commentary:

This incident of a man from the crowd that was following Jesus, requesting him to serve as a judge in the division of an inheritance and the Parable of the Rich Fool that Jesus spoke in response to him, occasions Luke's record of Jesus' teaching to look to God for one's security and not to one's own ability to accumulate possessions and lay up wealth for the future. Jesus sensed that the greed in the

man's heart prompted him to make this request and therefore instead of helping him to get his inheritance, Jesus pointed the man to a different understanding of life. Jesus wanted the man to realize that life is not valued or measured in terms of wealth or possessions. Earlier in the Gospel, Luke mentioned the words of Jesus stating that one may gain the whole world and yet lose one's soul while on the other hand true blessing comes from hearing the word of God and doing it.

The parable begins by showing a rich man having an abundance of produce from his land. This may reflect the popular notion that wealth is a sign of God's goodness and blessing but the parable goes on to remind the hearers in the crowd the Jewish wisdom tradition's warning about the prudent use of wealth. The rich man's field bringing him an overflowing harvest was undoubtedly a blessing from God but the problem that Jesus pointed out was his insistence on gathering all of it and storing it up for his own use. Not once did the rich man think about giving to those in need and making provisions for the whole community from the size of the harvest which exceeded his calculations and made it hard for him to store. Instead, being caught in a quandary and inner uncertainty, he decided in his own heart what he would do: he would tear down his barns and build bigger ones, he would gather there all of his grain and goods, and when this would be done his soul would be at rest with the knowledge of the wealth accumulated for many years ahead which would be the source for a comfortable and enjoyable lifestyle. The man planned in his heart the solution which would make his future secure and pleasurable and this reflected his pride in being confident that he would do what he intended and also his greed in considering all of the grain and goods he possessed to be his alone.

The man had shut out everyone else from his life and thoughts. There was no one else in the story—just the man and his possessions—until God spoke to him and what God spoke was on what his future actually held for him just when he envisioned it within himself. The reversal in what God told the man was extremely sharp because we see that the closing words of the man was 'be merry' while the opening words of God to him was 'you fool' even as God's announcement of 'this night' contrasts the rich man's presumption of 'many years.' All along the man presumed and boasted that he could hoard the bounty of the harvest for himself but God's judgment purposed otherwise that his possessions would suddenly take his life and it would not be known to whom it would then belong. The final words of Jesus in this parable drives home the point of the story: what really matters in life is not the pursuit of amassing wealth for oneself but in seeking a meaningful relationship with God and obeying God's will.

- Adapted from The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary, Vol IX, pp. 255-6

Questions to Ponder for Accountability in the Group:

1. Was the rich man's fault being 'rich' and why would Jesus here and elsewhere in the Gospels warn against riches?
2. In this parable what was the folly of the rich man? Does this story expose our own inner commitments and make us look at our lives and what voices we listen to within?
3. What does this story reveal about the crowd that was following Jesus? What was the motivation of the man who made the request to Jesus and how does this challenge us to re-evaluate our Christian calling and discipleship?
4. What does this story about Jesus and the story that Jesus told teach us about priority?

Activity for the Life of a Disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMCC.
2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week: Luke 12:15 NRSV
¹⁵ 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."