

FOUNDATIONS FOR
LAITY RENEWAL

Transforming Daily Life

719 Earl Garrett Street
Kerrville, TX 78028

Three Sermon Outlines on
Work and Faith

Living Life Under God

David Garland

SERMON NOTES

*The
High Calling
of Our
Daily Work*

*Making a real living connects you to a bigger picture,
a grand design, an abundant life.
Each of us has only a small part to play, but what a part!
It's the high calling of our daily work.*

– Howard Butt, Jr., of Laity Lodge
TheHighCalling.org

David E. Garland is the Dean of George W. Truett Seminary at Baylor University and the William M. Hinson Professor of Christian Scriptures. He is the author and editor of twenty books including commentaries on Matthew, Mark, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon. He was the New Testament editor for the revision of the Expositor's Bible Commentary. He just published a commentary on Luke for the Zondervan Exegetical Commentary series. He and his wife, Diana, who is Dean of the Baylor School of Social Work, also published *Flawed Families of the Bible: How God's Grace Works through Imperfect Relationships*, which has been translated into Korean and Russian.

Sermon 2: The Rich Fool (Luke 12:13-21)

1. The Situation

A man accosts Jesus demanding that he settle a dispute between himself and his brother about their father's inheritance. We might guess that he was the younger brother eager to get his hands on some cash so that he could split to fairer climes.

Jesus is not flattered by this man's good opinion of his moral influence on others and does not respond kindly. The man has rudely interrupted him in the middle of his teaching, and it served as a rude reminder of how deaf the average person was to his warnings about the urgency of the hour. He represents a typical member of the multitude so absorbed in his own little world and petty concerns that he is oblivious to Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God that would turn that world upside down. His universe was so small that he was at the very center of it. Jesus had a more important mission to fulfill than to do the work of a justice of the peace. He had set his face to go to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51) because there was more to life than property. Abundant life does not consist in an abundance of possessions. He said that you can gain the whole world and wind up losing what is most important to you, your very soul (Luke 9:23–25). Jesus pointedly responds, "Let me tell you a parable about a fool."

2. A Rich Fool?

The parable is usually titled "The Rich Fool." To be honest, that is God's verdict, not necessarily ours. To many, the fellow in this parable is not such a fool. He was seemingly farsighted, practical, and successful. He made sharp business decisions and shrewd investments. There is no suggestion that he got his money as a crook through insider trading. He had a knack for turning everything he touched into money.

Most admire someone like this. He carefully watched his money and did what most of us would do—carefully plan how that money could get him more money and make him more comfortable.

Many might envy him with his beautiful house and his lifestyle of the rich and famous, but Jesus pitied him. He was well-prepared for this life but totally unprepared for the life to come. Securing one's financial future does not mean that one has secured one's future.

3. The Best Investment Strategy?

The man has a pleasant business problem: a bumper crop (supplied by God, by the way) and already bulging barns. Should he stockpile his grain until the price of wheat goes up or to insure against possible bad harvests? He thinks he must have bigger barns to keep his good things safe and secure from all alarms. But barns are not the only place to store treasures, and there are other kinds of treasures that are not measured by dollar signs. Jesus says, "Do not store up your treasures

on earth where moth and worms destroy and thieves will break in and rob you blind. Store up treasures for yourselves in heaven instead, where neither moth or rust destroy and where thieves do not have a chance getting past the security system.” (Matthew 6:19). According to Jesus, there are those who have seen huge barns in heaven to store their treasures that they will never go bankrupt. They trust God to provide all they need and more and are free to invest their lives in others by generously giving alms.

4. The Danger of Being Self-Centered

The rich man asks, “What shall I do with my surplus? Where am I going to store all my grain?” Jesus taught us to pray, “Give us each day our daily bread” (Luke 11:3). This man had plenty for today, plenty for next month, and plenty for the next twenty years. He struggles with what to do with his overabundance when there were widows in the land with barely two mites to rub together (Luke 21:1–4) and beggars like Lazarus starving at his doorstep (Luke 16:19–31). He had plenty of storage in the mouths of the hungry, but he thinks only about himself.

According to Jesus, this man basically had three bigger problems than a storage dilemma.

4.1 Greed

He was greedy. He operated on the mathematical truism that the more you get the more you have. His philosophy was, “Get all you can, can all you get, and sit on your can.” Jesus reckoned in spiritual truths: “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).

4.2 Practical Atheism

He forgot to factor God into his business spreadsheet. The psalmist declares, “A fool says in his heart that there is no God” (Ps. 14:1). The rich man probably never said that there is no God, but he lived like it. He says these are “my” crops, “my” barns, “my” grain, “my” good things, and I am going to enjoy them in “my” good time. There are six Is and four mys in his soliloquy. He learns too late that all these things were only on temporary loan from God.

4.3 Mortality

Despite all of our medical advances, the mortality rate remains steady at 100%. No one has yet come up with a cure for eternity. He learns too late that the only possessions worth working for and storing up are those that death cannot take away. “You fool,” God says, “This very night your life is being demanded of you!” He died with his barns filled with earthly treasures, but his heart was stuck on empty. The man who was so shrewd is now so dead.

5. An Imagined Funeral

One can imagine his memorial service with the funeral parlor parking lot chock full of luxury vehicles. The relatives file past his casket saying things like, “Doesn’t he look natural.” Moments later, however, they will be squabbling in the parking lot about who was going to get the big barns and all the goodies. Some of them will never speak to each other again except through their lawyers.

Others may ask, “How much do you think that guy was worth?” Jesus was asking the same question. The answer he sought was not how much he was worth on paper, but how much was he worth in God’s assessment. From Jesus’ perspective, the man was not worth the paper his insurance policy was written on. Jesus looked at things from the standpoint of eternity. From out there, our greed looks pretty foolish. God has a nasty habit of rudely interrupting our lives right in the middle of our feverish money-making. “Tonight, your soul is required of you.” Who wants somebody to say at their eulogy, “This was the richest person I know”? Or, “This was a shrewd operator, a real hard hitter”? Would it not be better for someone to testify that this was the kindest, most generous person they ever knew—not because this one was such a good person, but because they responded to what God had done for them in Christ. Paul says, “For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich” (2 Cor. 8:9).