

shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

18 And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

20 But God said unto him, *Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?*

21 So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

18 to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my corn and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, be merry. But God said unto him, Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee; and the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

General Statement.

Like the preceding lessons, the date and environments of this scene cannot be exactly stated. The story is a beautiful illustration of the manner in which Jesus took advantage of the most promising incidents to teach spiritual truth.

EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL NOTES.

Verse 13, 14. One of the company. A random hearer. He is willing to set aside all helpful ministry to needy souls until his own fancied financial wrongs are righted. (1) *The Lord himself could not awaken the interest of every hearer.* (2) *Even to-day some men have no use for Jesus but to help their own secular prosperity.* (3) *Secular interests blind men's eyes to spiritual concerns.* **Master.** It was customary to choose a rabbi for an arbitrator, but the ablest and holiest of the Jewish rabbis declined to so act. **Speak to my brother.** His wrongs may have been real, but his demand was based upon a mistaken view of Christ's mission. (4) *Our conduct should be seemingly as well as our cause righteous.* (5) *Most of the disagreements among men arise from a love of money.* **Divide the inheritance.** The laws of inheritance among the Jews differed widely from ours. Precisely what difficulties had arisen in this case it is impossible to tell. **Who made me.** At another time he said, My kingdom is not of this world. The Church has nothing to do with secular disputes. **A judge or a divider.** A magistrate having authority, or an arbitrator who decides questions submitted to him by one or both parties. But why might not Christ act as a judge? (1) Only a few weeks of life now remained to him. He had hardly any time even for miracles, and seems to have spent entire days in preaching. (2) His work was not to determine particular cases, but to establish universal eternal principles. (6) *Christ does speak to every man concerning his conduct toward his brother, but it is to change his heart rather than to direct his specific actions.*

15. Unto them. From the individual he turns to the multitude. **Take heed, and beware.** Christ "doubles his charge that we should double our circumspection." **Covetousness.** Not coveting; not the wicked desire to possess that which already belongs to another, but covetousness—inordinate desire for wealth. The line between the lawful and unlawful wish must be drawn by each man's conscience under God's eye. He whose chief aim in life is to get rich is a sinner, whether he be fraudulent or honest. Covetousness is more nearly universal than any other sin, and if one breach of God's law can be worse than another, this is morally the worst. "The love of money is the root of all evil." Forgeries, swindlings, oppression of the poor, strikes, and lawsuits will be no more when all classes take heed and beware of covetousness. **A man's life consisteth not.** And yet even Christians sometimes ask, when a man dies, "What was he worth?" forgetting that his worth is not to be tabulated in dollars, but in virtues. (7) *Not what a man has, but what he is, constitutes his true life.*

16, 17. A parable. A story enfolding a great moral principle. **The ground.** ...brought forth plentifully. This man neither forged a check nor wrecked

a bank. He simply gathered in a rich harvest. Where was his guilt? **Thought.** Here is where his sin begins. Literally, he "dialogued" with himself, as if two elements within his nature were engaged in discussion. **What shall I do.** "Other men are perplexed to get wealth; this man is perplexed to know how to dispose of his."—Whedon. **No room.** Saint Ambrose centuries ago beautifully wrote, "Yes thou hast; the bosoms of the poor, the houses of widows, the mouths of infants, these are thy barns." **Fruits.** Produce of all sorts, particularly green.

18, 19. My barns. In Oriental countries harvests are often stored in caves; sometimes pits like coal-vaults are used; but this rich farmer would appear to have possessed buildings erected for the purpose. **There will I bestow.** He would hoard his gains, not use them. Grain stored grows musty. Money locked up may be stolen. Men employed simply in gaining knowledge, without disseminating it, grow narrow and pedantic. The innate forces of nature are in harmony with God's law in almost forcing us, whether we will or not, to work for others. **My fruits.** The repetition of the pronouns "my," and "I" in this parable, as indicative of selfishness, is noticed elsewhere. **Say to my soul.** As if his soul could feed on grain. One might as well attempt to satisfy hunger by reading a daily paper as to satisfy mental and moral longings by much goods laid up for many years. He forgets who is Master of time. (8) *How hard it is for men to believe they are not to live forever.* **Goods.** It is odd that in nearly every language secular possessions have been called "goods." So prone are we to forget the intrinsic worthlessness of wealth and the genuine worth of character. **Take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.** That is, be lazy, gluttonous, drunken, and licentious. (9) *Pleasure is always in the future, never quite realized.*

20. But God said. God's voice is an unwelcome interruption to every undevout reverie. (10) *God speaks oftener than men hear.* **Thou fool.** In the Bible the fool is always the man who lacks moral sense. His folly appears (1) in forgetting God; (2) in false estimates of life; (3) in living for self; (4) in forgetting death. (11) *The man whom the world calls wise and prudent is often the man whom God calls a fool.* **This night.** Any man's soul may be summoned at any instant, and how foolish not to make preparation for the call. **Required of thee.** Demand of thee, as if disease and death were God's messengers summoning his soul.

21. So is he. Every body who lays up treasure for himself in place of laying up for God is such a fool as was this rich man. (12) *The sin is not in having, or in laying up the treasure, but in doing this for self.* **Not rich toward God.** He is rich toward God who has those things which God esteems valuable: true character and earnest benevolence.