**Rich Toward God**

*Luke 12:21*

**Introduction**

1. It can be easy for us to lose focus on what is of true substance because we are spiritual creatures existing in a physical universe.
2. When we think of our existence we tend to do so within a physical context.
3. However, our very being is with spiritual foundation, which should change how we operate in this life.
   1. We do not exist, in our very core, because of physical processes. Therefore, our ultimate life is not made up of anything physical.
   2. When we understand this, we will not give the ultimate emphasis to anything physical (not just possession wise, but any matter pertaining to life under the sun).
   3. Rather, we will be devoted, with all at our disposal, to the spiritual gain.
4. Jesus responded to one who had such a skewed perspective with a parable demonstrating what life is not about, and what it is all about – **Luke 12:13-21**
5. The Problem
6. A Vain Perspective **(v. 15)**
   1. **Life** – *zōē* not *bios*
      1. *Bios* – “1 life and activity associated with it” (BDAG)
         1. ***“affairs of this life” (2 Timothy 2:4)***.
         2. ***“pleasures of life” (Luke 8:14)***.
      2. *Bios* – “2 resources needed to maintain life” (BDAG)
         1. ***“livelihood” (Mark 12:44; Luke 8:43)***.
         2. ***“this world’s goods” (1 John 3:17)***.
      3. It may be said that one’s *bios* consists in the things he possesses (to a degree) – ***“your Father knows that you need these things” (Luke 12:30).***
         1. However, not covetousness, but contentment (**cf. 1 Timothy 6:8**).
      4. *zōē (N)* – “of life as a principle, life in the absolute sense” (VINE)
         1. Verb – *zaō* – “live,” “living” – to live.
         2. “One striking reason for the futility of all covetousness is the simple fact that a man's *zōē*, the actual life in him, the life principle (not *Bios*, the life one lives) is not drawn from his earthly possessions. He will not have a bit more of actual life when he has much or a bit less of that life when he has little.” (Lenski, R. C. H., *Lenski's Commentary on the New Testament (20 Vols.)*, e-book, 1517 Media)
      5. *zōē* – “transcendent life” (BDAG)
         1. So, spiritual, and takes on a dual meaning of not just life as a principle (i.e. I am alive spiritually), but in the fellowship which constitutes that life (i.e. walking according to the Spirit of God, **cf. Galatians 5:25**, *zaō*).
         2. Ultimate context here – **(v. 20**) – shows his life does not consist in such because it did not sustain life when God called him to reckoning. (**cf. Mark 8:35**)
            1. **(vv. 1-3)** – warning against hypocrisy.
            2. **(vv. 4-5)** – call to fear God who can destroy the soul – hell, spiritual (2nd) death.
            3. (**vv. 8-9**) – call to confess, not deny Christ.
            4. **(v. 10)** – warning against blasphemy against the HS.
            5. Spiritual, then a man brings a physical matter Jesus – (**vv. 13-14**) – Jesus isn’t here for the physical, but spiritual.
            6. **Therefore, ultimately speaking of his higher, spiritual existence, and whether it is alive or dead – not based on physical things.**
   2. **Covetousness** – but not simply in the monetary sense, possessions, or even tangible matters.
      1. **Pleonexia** – “the state of desiring to have more than one’s due” (BDAG)
      2. ***“every form of greed” (NASB***)
      3. **Ephesians 4:17-19** – ***“alienated from the life (zōē) of God,” “to work all uncleanness with greediness (pleonexia)”***
         1. They were separated from life – i.e. dead.
         2. Because of their desire for more than their due – ultimately manifested in the sphere of “lewdness” and “uncleanness.”
         3. COULD BE SAID FOR THE LIFE GIVEN TO ANY WORK OF THE FLESH – **Galatians 5:19-21** (uncleanness, lewdness, and the like…)
   3. **Vanity of perspective**, not just in the material/monetary/possession sense (**2 Timothy 3:1-4**):
      1. ***“lovers of themselves”*** – self-esteem, self-image
      2. ***“boasters, proud…haughty”*** – pride, display of arrogance
      3. ***“lovers of pleasure”*** – seeking what feels good, self-help, etc.
   4. ***“life does not consist in the abundance of”***:
      1. Friends, compliments, acknowledgments, achievements, “likes” and “comments,” etc.
      2. It doesn’t consist in relationships, “fitting in,” etc.
7. A Vain Emphasis **(vv. 16-18)**
   1. Jesus speaks a parable to show the foolishness of such a perspective, and corresponding focus of life.
   2. **(v. 16)** – nothing wrong with this.
      1. ***“a certain rich man”*** – nothing wrong with being rich, but this is all he amounted to – his words show that’s as deep as he went.
   3. **(v. 17)** – still nothing inherently wrong, but manifests (within context) his distraction with the ephemeral.
      1. ***“What shall I do…”*** – the expressed thought of **verse 15** – how might I sustain my life?
   4. **(v. 18)** – his vain focus on doing the impossible – providing guarantee for my future **(v. 19)** – **cf. James 4:14-15**
   5. Note the personal pronouns – **(vv. 17-19)** – 12x in original (I, my).
      1. Ironically, he is so concerned about himself that he actually neglects himself! (**cf. Mark 8:36-37**)
   6. Life doesn’t consist in anything regarding this temporary age – **cf. 1 John 2:15-17** – ***“pride of life (bios)”*** – i.e. pride in the activities of life (like the rich man), did not sustain the principle of life (*zōē*) – that he who does God’s will abides forever (everlasting life, *zōē*).
      1. Why emphasize that which is passing away?
      2. Why not emphasize that which will endure?
8. A Vain Assurance **(v. 19)**
   1. There is a shift from anxiety **(v. 17)** to relief and confidence **(v. 19).**
      1. It is not that the feeling of assurance was not real.
      2. However, this is no different than the pleasure that sin offers – it is pleasure but passing pleasure (**cf. Hebrews 11:25**).
      3. **It is only afforded through ignorance (WILLFUL OR OTHERWISE) – and ignorance does not eliminate objective facts, but simply doesn’t take them into account.**
   2. His ***“ease”*** was only in the time it took for him to say what he said to himself **(v. 19).**
   3. **Galatians 6:7-8** – sowing is always followed by reaping – you may find some relief/reward in your sowing, but the reaping will come.
      1. **Matthew 6:1-4** – shows the problem beyond a covetousness for mammon – pride, recognition, human glory.
      2. ***“they have their reward”*** – it is vain assurance because the reward is the sowing, but reaping follows and will only bring punishment.
      3. **Sowing to the Spirit** – may not receive reward in the present, but reaping follows with reward – THERFORE THE ASSURANCE IS LEGITIMATE.
   4. **Vain assurance** through finding acceptance, popularity, self-esteem, or any other thing considered before, but with the spiritual neglected.
9. A Vain Recognition **(v. 20)**
   1. God’s words would have produced in the man an intense regret for his wasted time on things he could not take with him.
   2. **Psalm 39:4-7** – seek the recognition of such now. (contrast **vv. 6-7** – thinking life consists in things vs being rich toward God)
   3. Jesus’ parable is intended to give the recognition now, so that it isn’t vain – (**vv. 15, 21**) – life consists in being rich toward God. Figure that out now!
10. Be Rich Toward God
11. A Change in Perspective (Recognition), Emphasis, and Assurance
    1. **Luke 12:21** – be rich toward God.
       1. Rich in regard to the things of God.
       2. **Luke 12:31** – kingdom of God (***“and His righteousness,” Matthew 6:33***).
       3. **Luke 12:33** – wealth that is spiritual.
    2. Perspective of faith – **2 Corinthians 5:7** – which is truly inseparable from the life of faith (“walk by”).
12. Forgiveness
    1. Pursue the riches of righteousness – **1 Timothy 6:11** (after expressing the folly of desiring to be rich)
    2. **Romans 4:5-8** – blessedness of righteousness expressed in the negative.
       1. Imputed (accounted) righteousness = unimputed/unaccounted sin.
       2. Such a blessing comes first from the humble recognition of the curse – **Matthew 5:3-6** – poor (recognition of lost state), mourn (penitence in guilt), meek (submissive yielding of control to God’s will), hunger and thirst (pursuit of God’s will, and right standing).
       3. Then we can understand the wealth of forgiveness.
    3. **Psalm 32:1-5, 10-11** – from unbearable weight of sin to the uncontainable shout of joy.
13. Fellowship
    1. I.e. a relationship with God through Jesus – participation, sharing, communion.
    2. We are for Him – **1 Corinthians 8:6**
    3. Ultimate joy is found in fellowship with Him through Jesus – **1 John 1:1-4** (Word in whom is life and light – **John 1:4**, *zōē* – **John 14:6**)
    4. **Philippians 3:10** – life does consist in fellowship with God, to the degree that Paul counted all loss to know even the fellowship of Christ’s suffering.
14. Transformation
    1. No image we seek to be conformed to will afford any fulfillment – rich, popular, wise, attractive, successful, noble, powerful, etc.
    2. Our aim should be the fullness of Christ – **Ephesians 4:13**
    3. Consuming Jesus that He becomes the very essence of our being is where life, and thus true riches are found – **John 6:48-51, 53-58, 63, 68-69** (***“life”*** – *zōē*)
15. Hope
    1. The hope that is sure and real (in contrast to the rich man’s expectation – **Luke 12:19**) is the final transformation – **Romans 8:28-30** – it is sure and real because it is by the will of God.
       1. ***“image of His Son”*** – glorified state – ***“glorified”*** (future).
    2. Life consists in this possession because it is eternal – **1 Peter 1:3-5**
    3. **1 Corinthians 15:20-23** – we will be raised to be like Christ (***“firstfruits”*** shows we will take on His form).
       1. And therefore enter heaven – **1 Corinthians 15:50**

**Conclusion**

1. We must not get caught up in the pursuits of this temporary physical life.
2. It is not what we perceive with our physical senses that grants us life, but the things of God in which our spiritual life consists – it is the latter which we should pursue.