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~ Guard Against Greed ~

You can learn much more about this story by doing these three things:

1. Read Luke 12:1-21.
2. Discover key cultural and historical insights.
3. Answer the reflective questions.

1. Read the text of the story.

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Luke 12:1-21 NASB	Luke 12:1-21 NLT
<p>Meanwhile, when a crowd of many thousands had gathered, so that they were trampling on one another, Jesus began to speak first to his disciples, saying: “Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. ² There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. ³ What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the roofs.</p> <p>⁴ “I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. ⁵ But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after your body has been killed, has authority to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him. ⁶ Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. ⁷ Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.</p> <p>⁸ “I tell you, whoever publicly acknowledges me before others, the Son of Man will also acknowledge before the angels of God. ⁹ But whoever disowns me before others will be disowned before the angels of God. ¹⁰ And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.</p> <p>¹¹ “When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, ¹² for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say.”</p> <p>¹³ Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my</p>	<p>Meanwhile, the crowds grew until thousands were milling about and stepping on each other. Jesus turned first to his disciples and warned them, “Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees—their hypocrisy. ² The time is coming when everything that is covered up will be revealed, and all that is secret will be made known to all. ³ Whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered behind closed doors will be shouted from the housetops for all to hear!</p> <p>⁴ “Dear friends, don’t be afraid of those who want to kill your body; they cannot do any more to you after that. ⁵ But I’ll tell you whom to fear. Fear God, who has the power to kill you and then throw you into hell. Yes, he’s the one to fear.</p> <p>⁶ “What is the price of five sparrows—two copper coins? Yet God does not forget a single one of them. ⁷ And the very hairs on your head are all numbered. So don’t be afraid; you are more valuable to God than a whole flock of sparrows.</p> <p>⁸ “I tell you the truth, everyone who acknowledges me publicly here on earth, the Son of Man will also acknowledge in the presence of God’s angels. ⁹ But anyone who denies me here on earth will be denied before God’s angels. ¹⁰ Anyone who speaks against the Son of Man can be forgiven, but anyone who blasphemes the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.</p> <p>¹¹ “And when you are brought to trial in the synagogues and before rulers and authorities, don’t worry about how to defend yourself or what to say, ¹² for the Holy</p>

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<p>brother to divide the inheritance with me.”</p> <p>¹⁴ Jesus replied, “Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?” ¹⁵ Then he said to them, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.”</p> <p>¹⁶ And he told them this parable: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. ¹⁷ He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’</p> <p>¹⁸ “Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. ¹⁹ And I’ll say to myself, “You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.”’</p> <p>²⁰ “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’</p> <p>²¹ “This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.”</p>	<p>Spirit will teach you at that time what needs to be said.”</p> <p>¹³ Then someone called from the crowd, “Teacher, please tell my brother to divide our father’s estate with me.”</p> <p>¹⁴ Jesus replied, “Friend, who made me a judge over you to decide such things as that?” ¹⁵ Then he said, “Beware! Guard against every kind of greed. Life is not measured by how much you own.”</p> <p>¹⁶ Then he told them a story: “A rich man had a fertile farm that produced fine crops. ¹⁷ He said to himself, ‘What should I do? I don’t have room for all my crops.’ ¹⁸ Then he said, ‘I know! I’ll tear down my barns and build bigger ones. Then I’ll have room enough to store all my wheat and other goods. ¹⁹ And I’ll sit back and say to myself, “My friend, you have enough stored away for years to come. Now take it easy! Eat, drink, and be merry!”’</p> <p>²⁰ “But God said to him, ‘You fool! You will die this very night. Then who will get everything you worked for?’</p> <p>²¹ “Yes, a person is a fool to store up earthly wealth but not have a rich relationship with God.”</p>
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2. Discover key cultural and historical insights

The following insights are from Kenneth Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*.

- The man in the crowd calls him “teacher” or “rabbi”. A rabbi would be expected to rule on civil affairs.
- “O man” is a tone of disapproval. Jesus is asked to be a judge, but he refuses to go along with it.
- The fact that the man is asking Jesus to side with him in the dispute shows that a relationship has been broken. Jesus has not come to be a divider (meristes). He has come to be a reconciler (mesistes).
- Who made me a judge over the two of you. “You” is in the plural.
- Ambrose, “the rich man has storage available in the mouths of the needy.” Augustine, a man stores grain on a damp floor and needs to move it above, i.e. Heaven. Ecclesiastes 5:10
- In this society, men dialogued with one another. They did their thinking in public and make decisions after spending hours with friends talking. But this man had no friends. He did his dialoguing with himself only. He was rich enough that he did not need anyone else. And not needing anyone else, he comes to a decision by himself which usually leads to ruin.

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- He has now come to the great goal of his life and he makes a speech but no one is there to listen. He can only address himself, “Soul,” Nephesh refers to the whole person. He believes he has met his complete needs by his material possessions.
- The Greek has four words for fool – anoetos, mindless; asophos – without wisdom; moros – moron; aphron – fool/stupid. The last two are the strongest. The rich man thought the many things (euphoreo) produced the good life (euphron) but it really produced stupidity (aphron).

Answer these reflective questions.

The first part of this story is based on Luke 11:37-53. What was the controversy between Jesus and the Pharisees?

In Luke 12:1-3, Jesus warned against the yeast of the Pharisees. How should verses 2-3 protect people from hypocrisy?

In Luke 12:4-7, Jesus gave comforting words for those who were faced with real dangers. How did these words bring comfort? What fears do you face in your life? How do these verses bring comfort to your life?

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The neighbor in the story helped his friend at midnight to be hospitable in order to maintain honor. What does this teach us about God being faithful to hear and answer our prayers?

Jesus told the crowds to be on guard against every form of greed? In what ways can greed show up in a person? Is the area of greed under control in your life?

What does it mean to be rich towards God?
