



31 July - 6 August 2022 Rich towards God

Related Bible reading(s): Luke 12.13-21

Bible study on Luke 12.13-21

This study can be used by a small family/household group, or by an online group, or – sometimes with a little adaptation – by an individual.

See our [Guidelines for a weekly Bible study](#).

Begin with an opening prayer

God of richness beyond our imagining,
of love beyond our comprehension,
of giving beyond our worth,
of forgiveness beyond our earning,
of generosity beyond anything we need,
we adore you.

Amen.

Read the passage

Consider different ways to read the text. For example, hearing it in more than one version of the Bible.

In an online group, you could share parts between those present, or use/adapt this week's Share the Word suggestion: Use the Jump to this week's menu on the right to go to Share the Word and scroll down to find the Gospel reading.

Explore and respond to the text

Start by reading the Bible notes below. You may want to read them more than once, or pause after each paragraph to reflect on what you have read.

Bible notes

The brother who refuses to share his inheritance is like the man in the parable who hoards his grain and goods. They are both driven by greed. The previous parables in this series of readings all include a neighbour, with heroes who are generous and hospitable, at some cost to themselves. But the self-sufficient and self-obsessed rich man is neighbour to no one. His moral values are embedded in his conversations with himself about the material world. He regards the land's produce as 'mine' (vv.17-18).

There is nothing intrinsically wrong in wanting to enjoy the fruits of labour. The rich man's mistake lies in his myopic vision of abundance. Has he sown, tended and harvested his land without help? Hardly. So, his workers too should share the benefits of the harvest. Is grain so plentiful that other farmers have done equally well this year? Not necessarily. Like the time when there was grain in Egypt but not in Canaan (Genesis 41.53ff), he may only be able to relax because others must pay high prices.

This is the only one of Jesus' parables in which God appears – ominously, for he judges that the rich man is a fool (v.20); not only because others will enjoy the fruits of his labours once he's dead (as in Ecclesiastes 2.20-23), but because he is essentially soulless. There is no one else in his world. His god inhabits barns full of grain. He is content to live off material capital, with no social or spiritual reserves to draw on when crisis comes. Presumably the indiscriminate generosity of God means nothing to him (see Luke 6.30-38). He is not fit for God's kingdom, and can expect to share the fate of another rich and selfish man in a later parable (Luke 16.19-31).

See also: [In conversation: Fit for the kingdom](#)



[John Parr and Hannah Currin discuss the importance of celebrating Trinity Sunday, identifying your neighbour and the restfulness \(or not\) of prayer](#)

Reflection

Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.

Imelda Marcos was the First Lady of the Philippines from 1965-1986. She and her late husband, Ferdinand (d.1989), amassed a vast fortune during this time, mostly stolen from their own people. The Marcos family were notorious for their lavish lifestyle, despite the country's economic hardships. Imelda is said to have owned 3,000 pairs of shoes, many of which were publicly displayed as symbols of excess after she and Ferdinand were deposed in 1986. In 2009, some of these shoes suffered irreparable damage caused by flooding, termites, mould and neglect when they were stored in the National Museum in Manila. That same year, Imelda was hailed by Newsweek as 'one of the greediest people of all time', to which she replied, 'I plead guilty.' The man – or woman – in Jesus' parable is still with us; so is Jesus' challenge.

Questions for reflection

You may wish to use these questions and the picture to help you think about or discuss issues arising from this week's Bible passage.



Click on the image to view a larger version or use the [Jump menu](#) to go to [This week's images](#). For artist's details, see [this issue's illustrators](#).

Questions

- What do you have in abundance?
- What might you do with that abundance?
- How do we become 'rich towards God'?

A simple activity

The good barn

Thinking about what we should treasure.

You will need: cards with a small box template on them [[template](#)]; scissors and glue sticks; slips of paper and pens.

Give each person a card with the box template on it. Cut the shape out, and label it on one of the sides: 'my barn'. Fold and glue it to make the box, but leave the lid open.

While that is drying, give out paper and pens. Invite people to write on the paper things that we should treasure, things that will make us 'rich towards God'. Examples could include prayer, acts of kindness, being generous – but encourage people to think widely and creatively. Put these inside the box and close (avoid using glue, see Go with God) the lid.

Use the Jump to this week's menu on the right to go to more activities in Explore and respond.

Prayer

Adapt to your local context.

Praise be to you, creator God, for the world around us in all its wonder and variety, for the richness and diversity it offers, for nature, the sea, the air, the plants and animals, and our fellow human beings.

Praise be to you, eternal God, that from one generation to the next you are our God and we are your people. We are all different to each other, but each of us is of equal value to you.

Praise be to you, holy God, that your generosity and being is beyond our comprehension and imagination so that we realise we are but a minute part in your creative order.

Praise be to you, loving God, for the love you have shown and the love we have been given by those who know you. Praise to you that you inspire and move with us to share and receive such love.

Praise be to you, generous God, for sufficiency beyond our imagining if only we will trust you and be guided by you.

Praise be to God, our Father and Mother, for the gift of Jesus.

Praise to be to God the Son, for walking this earth, teaching, showing, guiding, giving, living, dying.

Praise be to God the Holy Spirit, for indwelling within us and setting our hearts aflame with love for the world.

Praise be to God. Amen.

Use the Jump to this week's menu on the right to find more prayers, including up-to-date intercessions.

A prayer to end the Bible study

Loving God, you have given us eyes to see the beauty and bounty of the earth, and minds to understand the importance of sharing. As we go from this place, make us quick to see where there is injustice or suffering, and generous to do what we can to alleviate either.

Amen.

Go with God 24/7

Encourage everyone to put their faith into action.

Resolve to make a donation to the next (appropriate) charitable collecting box you see. Or, take something you don't need to a charity shop – something that you already have enough of, rather than something that is 'done with' (though you can do that too!).

*Encourage everyone to explore their faith this week with the **ROOTS at home** resource.*