

# Bigger Barns

## Learning

### Introducing the Parable (some example content you can engage with to prep and/or use as a group)

- **Read - Luke 12:13-21**
- **Context:** This parable falls in the Travel narrative as Jesus makes his way to Jerusalem. Immediately before the parable (Luke 12:1-12), Jesus offers a teaching about how the only person or thing worthy of our fear is God, we should not be afraid of anything else. And right after the parable is another teaching section (Luke 12:22-34) where he confronts worry and again says do not be afraid.
- **Interesting Words:** The word for greed (*pleonexia*) means “insatiable” or “excessive,” and carries undertones of animalistic or beastly behaviour. Someone acting in this way does not hesitate to disregard the needs of others or even bring harm to others for personal gain.
- **Culture:** Culturally, the man asking Jesus to be the judge, is either a younger brother because in Jewish culture the inheritance is awarded to the eldest brother (Deut. 21:17), or he is being defrauded we cannot say for sure. What is clear is his desire underlying the request is out of greed, which Jesus perceives. Further, it should be noted that the OT is not against farmers having an abundance nor storing up crops (Ps. 128:2; Gen. 41:35). His greed (and sin) is revealed by his motive for storing up to “Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry,” this tagline is the classic pagan philosophy for life of Epicureanism. This lifescrypt is one of indulgence and enjoyment, a powerful persuasive force within our own American culture.
- **Themes:** The problem at the surface is greed, but has roots in fear and worry. Jesus is exposing the spiritual power of material things. The farmer betrays wisdom by living as if there is no God; he both relies only on himself and does not think of others (echos of Prov. 11:18; 13:7; 23:4; 27:24; 28:20).
- **Quote for expanding the discussion:**
  - “There is no avoiding this condition of wealth, whether we conceive it as a spiritual blessing from God or the material results of a capitalistic economy. And all the time the greed virus is in our bloodstream. Sometimes there are enough Scripture antibodies (commandments, proverbs, parables) to protect us against infection. But there are other times when our defenses are lowered and our whole system is fatigued. We get the fever and runny nose of greed. It isn’t long before we are thinking about building a bigger barn.” Eugene Peterson

### Dialogue Questions (some example questions for this content above)

- **Read a 2nd time - Luke 12:13-21**
- What themes stand out in the parable? What connections do you see between the two?
- Consider having someone read the sections immediately before and after the parable (Luke 12:1-12 and Luke 12:22-34). How do these sections give deeper insight to what greed is?

### Implication Questions (some example questions/challenges that engage real life now)

- **Dialogue:** Try reading the quote above, pause for reflection.
  - What does your group think about this? Try to move the group past the cliché Christian responses or superficial pendulum swings.
  - How does our own Epicurean Americanism shape our deepest desires and fears?
  - What examples come to mind? What is the antidote to this?
  - What does responsible stewardship look like?
- **Meditation:** In Jesus’ telling there is an emphasis on personal pronouns from the perspective of the farmer; “my crops,” “my barns,” “my grain,” “my goods,” and “myself.” Pause, sit in silence, and reflect on where your mental chatter has been this week. Have you been consumed with personal pronouns and fixating on yourself this week? Come back to trust. Come back to God and community. Ask God to teach you the liberating freedom that being generous brings.