

*Text of a message delivered by Aidan Wivell at Windsor Park Baptist Church on Sunday 22nd March 2026.
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The Good Life

Luke 12:13-21

Last week I was catching up with some pastor friends at a Ponsonby café. Towards the end of our discussion we got onto the subject of financial security—the tension of being called to pastoral ministry, trusting God to provide, and wanting to provide for our growing families. As we finished our scrambled eggs and coffees and headed up to the counter to pay, we were stunned to hear that the table next to us had covered our bill. We all laughed—it felt like a cheeky reminder from God that he does provide for us.

I imagine we weren't the only ones thinking about financial security recently. With petrol back over \$3 per litre and economic uncertainty in the air, many of us are looking to side hustles, passive income, and investments to secure our future. It just makes good sense.

The ideal for many people today is summed up in the acronym FIRE: Financial Independence, Retire Early. The dream is simple—freedom, security, and the ability to live life on your own terms. At one extreme, this looks like influencers flaunting wealth, luxury, and freedom, presenting a vision of “the good life” that many aspire to. At the other end, it might look like someone living simply and stewarding wisely in order to be free to follow God without financial burden. Either way, it challenges the traditional 9–5, 18–65 narrative.

As we continue in our journey with Jesus, we encounter his own counter-cultural teaching on money—and we meet someone who seems to have achieved this dream.

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Last week Grant posed the question: *“What are we devoting our lives to, and is it something eternal?”*

As we progress into chapter 12 Jesus continues his rebuke of the Pharisees and teachers of the law, warning his disciples at the start of this chapter: ***“Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.” (12:1)*** He goes on to speak about judgement, about what is hidden being revealed, and about fear—calling people to fear God rather than people. Running through all of this is a call to **eternal perspective**.

Then, as often happens, he is interrupted.

Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” Jesus replied, “Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?” (12:13-14)

The man doesn't really ask a question—he tells Jesus what to do. He wants Jesus to take his side. Then Jesus turns to the crowd:

“Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.” And he tells this parable: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest.” (12:15-16)

There's no problem yet. The man is rich, and he has a good year. Then comes *the dilemma*:

He thought to himself, “What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.” (12:17)

What do you do with surplus? Maybe you've had moments like that—extra income, inheritance, more time. What do you do with it? Then comes *the decision*:

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.” (12:18)

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A logical solution. Expansion. Growth. Then comes *the dream*:

And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry." (12:19)

This is the dream. Security. Freedom. The good life. If this was 2026, we might say he's done it—financially savvy, forward-thinking, successful. We may aspire to be the man.

But God says:

"You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?" (12:20)

What the world calls wise, God calls foolish. What the world calls forward-thinking, God calls short sighted. Because for ^{this} man eternity is knocking. The phrase ***"your life will be demanded of you"*** suggests something being returned—a loan coming due. His life is required back. Like a library book it's not yours to keep. God says that this man's life is due to be returned – and there are no extensions.

The sobering truth is this life is a loan. And as much as we don't like it, this applies both for "rich fools" and beautiful souls who lived radiantly in the service of others. Sadly the past couple of weeks have given us cause to reflect on the fragility of life as we tragically lost two precious community members, Rob and Sarah.

Returning to the teaching, Jesus finishes:

"This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God." (12:21)

The Foolishness of the World

So now we're going to look at the two sides of this parable: the wisdom of Jesus, and the folly of the rich man. And for this man his foolishness begins with ***individualism***.

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Individualism is defined in the most basic terms as: *“the habit or principle of being independent and self-reliant”*

The rich fool is individualism to a tee. The parable plays out as a case study in self-absorption.

Let’s quickly look at verses 17-19 again highlighting the references to self:

He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’ “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. And I’ll say to myself...

‘We did it!! Me myself and I!’

It’s actually quite sad. In the famous words of Mr T: “I pity the fool”. There’s no party. No celebration. As the saying goes, success is nothing without someone you love to share it with.

There’s not one point where he consults anyone else. And this is in a culture where decisions were made together, where the elders at the gate of the town sat and discussed things like this. This man seems to have no community, no mates, no family, no village with which he can discern what to do with his resources.

The invitation for us here is to become more communal in how we make financial decisions. It’s extremely uncomfortable for many of us myself included. But I’m confident if we can break down those barriers it would lead to better discernment and stewardship.

The first foolish thing about this man is his individualism, the second is his **materialism**.

Materialism can be defined as *“a tendency to consider material possessions and physical comfort as more important than spiritual values.”* Jesus has already said that a man’s life does not consist of the abundance of his possessions, but we spend so much time thinking about material things.

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We're in the process of trying to sell our home and buy something else. It's our first time selling a home. It was exciting for the first week and then I got over it! Traipsing round open homes, imagining what life might be like in a house you don't own yet, and then getting a text from our agent that another potential buyer on our place has fallen through. If I'm honest it's ended up taking a lot of my mental energy. While driving now I notice every for-sale sign and wonder what life might be like if we got that house. The temptation is to think if we lived there, closer to the beach, with a spare room, and entertaining space – I'd be happier. I'd be content. I'd be more hospitable.

While I don't think there's anything innately wrong with trying to upgrade our house – I have felt the pull of materialism through this process. Later in the chapter as Jesus sums up his teaching on God's provision, he says: ***“where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Luke 12:34)***

The final “ism” of the foolish man is his ***hedonism***. Hedonism simply means the pursuit of pleasure. This is summed up in the man's retirement goal to ***“eat, drink, and be merry.”***

It's a phrase that comes up three other times in the Bible:

- ***Ecclesiastes 8:15*** seems to support the idea of eating, drinking, and being glad – the wisdom being that although life inevitably involves suffering and death, this is all the more reason to enjoy the good times that life does bring.
- In ***Isaiah 22:13*** the people reply sarcastically to Isaiah's prophetic judgement from God saying, ***“let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die”***.
- Most notably, Paul will pick up this phrase in ***1 Corinthians 15*** in a crucial passage on resurrection where he says: ***“If the dead are not raised, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” (1 Corinthians 15:32)***

Paul says that ***if there is no resurrection of the dead***, then sure this is a good philosophy to live by. If this life is all there is, then why would we not pursue as much pleasure as possible? ***But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who***

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have fallen asleep. (1 Corinthians 15:20) Because Jesus rose again, death has been defeated and is no longer the end! This is why we can, and must, take an eternal perspective on life.

Jesus' resurrection pushes out the horizon on which we can aim our hope and the perspective from which we evaluate our lives.

What shapes our view of the good life?

Having evaluated the foolishness of the rich man, we've all realised we're nothing like him right? As a thought experiment have a think about the people that you admire, those you aspire to be like, perhaps that are a season of life ahead of you. I want you to come up with at least one real person. You may know them personally or they may be someone you know of through their work or platform.

Think about that person that you're admiring...

- Do they have a nicer house than you do?
- Do they have greater financial security?
- Do you imagine they experience more comfort and pleasure?
- Do you imagine they have more freedom in how they use their time?

What shapes our view of the good life? Is it Jesus' teachings or the materialism, individualism, and hedonism of the culture that we live in?

The people that originally heard this parable were far worse off than us. Many would have lived from one harvest to the next with no savings, very few comforts, and basic clothing. And if Jesus calls them to be on guard against greed and not to store up for themselves - I wonder what he would say to us?

It's unsettling to think that we may be modelling our lives *more on the rich fool*, than on the wisdom of Jesus...

I know when we hear messages like this it's easy for us to sense judgement or guilt about our status in life. Please know that is not my intention, nor was it Jesus'. For me this is

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spoken not from a place of judgement but from a place of empathy because I know how hard this is personally. And as for Jesus' well he came to show us what the good life really is...

The Wisdom of Jesus

So let's look at four wise principals we can learn from Jesus:

1. First he says to **be on guard against all kinds of greed**. We still need to be on guard. The amount of advertisements that suggest happiness can be bought, secured, or relocated to, are unlimited. Our exposure to them is near constant. Watch out.
2. Second Jesus says **life does not consist of the abundance of possessions**. He doesn't say possessions are bad. He just says life is not found in them. That is not what the good life consists of. Jesus who said he came so that we could have life to the fullest - says if you're looking to possessions for life, it's empty. Don't worry about them.
3. Thirdly, Jesus teaches that **life is short**. Life is a gift. One of my favourite quotes which sits in my office is from Fredrick Buechner says "*All moments are key moments and life itself is grace.*" I often forget to look at it, let alone live it, but if the tragedy of the last couple of weeks has taught us anything – it's that life is a gift. As it says in Psalm 90:12 "**Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom**".
4. Finally Jesus calls his hearers not to store up for themselves but to be **rich towards God**. What does it mean to be rich towards God?

I stood at Takapuna beach stumped at how to answer this question and I sensed God simply showing me I was looking *toward* the beach. The sun was shining, the water was clear, everything was orientated toward the beauty in front of me.

When it comes to our riches are we turning toward God, or away from him? The rich fool was rich for himself. He was turned in on himself. Riches, in whatever form and amount they

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come, are stewardly faithfully when we bring them to God, with open hands and an open heart, and we do this best in community.

So what does the good life look like?

Not bigger barns. Not selfish ambition. But a life rich towards God and others. Where each day is received with gratitude, challenges are navigated in community, and where joy is shared generously. This life is a loan – a gift from God – and when we keep an eternal perspective it helps us to follow Jesus' today.

As we close we're going to sing a song that orientates all we have towards God. The words cover many areas of the good life, a life consecrated to God, and when it comes to our resources it says:

*Take my silver and my gold,
Not a mite would I withhold.*

Amen.



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Reflecting on Sunday 15th March 2026: Last week Grant challenged us about where our allegiance truly lies. As you reflect on the week that's been, when were you walking closely behind Jesus? When were you distracted from the journey?

These questions help you think more about this message. We hope they might be a conduit for conversation and reflection, encouraging us to wrestle with how this message might practically work itself out in our lives.

1. The sermon mentioned the idea of FIRE (Financial Independence, Retire Early). What do you think is appealing about that vision of life? What feels good or right about it?
2. Of the three “isms” mentioned—individualism, materialism, and hedonism—which do you feel most pulled toward personally? Why do you think that is?
3. The rich man made all his decisions alone. What role does community currently play in your big life or financial decisions? Where might God be inviting you into more openness?
4. What might it practically look like for you, in this season, to become **“rich toward God”**? Is there a specific step or shift you sense God inviting you into?

If you'd like to chat with someone about your spiritual journey or anything else going on in your life, please contact us at care@windsorpark.org.nz; **we're better together** and **no perfect people are allowed**.

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Below are some further resources that may take the message further and deeper and enable you to explore other viewpoints on the same theme. We also encourage you to engage with the preacher if there are further questions you have or if you'd like clarification on anything. Email info@windsorpark.org.nz and we'll direct your query to the appropriate person.

1. To be **rich towards God** clearly involves generosity. Here's a full set of resources on the **practice of generosity** from Practicing the Way with readings, podcasts, and video teachings which can be drawn from individually or with your life group!
<https://www.practictheway.org/generosity>
2. If you'd like to expand your library a bit and hear from two spiritual leaders from different faith traditions on **joy** check out this book by Douglas Adams with the Dalai Lama and the late Archbishop Desmond Tutu.
<https://www.paperplus.co.nz/shop/books/non-fiction/mind-body-spirit/general/the-book-of-joy-335753>
3. Recently we launched a **Podcast** to dive **Beyond the Message** each week. Give it a listen as we reflect on this message and answer any questions you have on it! We're excited to continue the conversation!
<https://www.windsorpark.org.nz/podcasts>