Luke 12:13-21

Sunday, August 3, 2025 - Meditation

"Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me." Someone in the crowd was involved in a family dispute over his inheritance and thought Jesus, as an authority figure, could act as an arbitrator to solve it. It's a very familiar situation – families fighting over money, over who gets a fair share after the death of a parent. Just as New York has intestate succession laws when there's no will, Jewish law also had guidelines for how an inheritance was to be distributed. But this unnamed person in the crowd must have disagreed with the arrangement and demanded that Jesus step in to force his brother to divide the estate.

Jesus, however, sees what's really going on. He goes to the heart of the matter: he sees the greed and covetousness behind the demand. "Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?" Then he turns to the crowd, "Take

care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions."
What *IS* often behind family feuds over money — over inheritances, property division in divorce, even custody disputes? Jesus refuses to be the judge on material matters but is uniquely qualified to judge matters of the heart. "Be on your guard against all kinds of greed." He knows how many manifestations of greed humans are capable of. Not only is it at the root of family conflicts but global ones as well.
Elsewhere in the New Testament, in the book of James, we are confronted with this question: "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight."

"What's wrong with people?", we ask. Jesus tells us with a parable about a rich man whose land produced abundantly—his harvest was not only a sign of present

wealth but also a form of future security. His retirement plan. His social security. His stocks and bonds. So, he decides to build even bigger barns and says to himself, Now I can relax. Life is good. No worries.

"But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?'" The man had put his trust in his wealth, but it was a false security. Spiritually, he was bankrupt. "So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God."

The sin is not only in having all that wealth, not to mention hoarding it. The sin is thinking that it belongs to us, that we've earned it, that we're entitled to it. This sense of entitlement is what Jesus perceived in the man who asked him to arbitrate the inheritance. It is this that separates us from God and turns us into fools, storing up treasures for ourselves, but not being rich toward God.

"What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?" The same tragedy struck the people of Israel. In the book of Amos, God recalls his

tenderness: how he led them with cords of kindness, with bands of love. “I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks. I bent down to them and fed them.” But “The more I called them, the more they went from me.”

The sin is this: abandoning our identity as God’s redeemed people and seeking other gods, whatever form they may take.

But Paul, writing to the Colossians, offers us the cure: “So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.”

This is the central point we need to grasp: You have died. You have been raised with Christ. You no longer belong to this world. Why would you put your hopes in the things of this world? You belong to Christ and your true inheritance is in heaven. Be rich toward God. “Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.”

Nothing here truly belongs to us - still less are we entitled to it. So why would we act as though it did? “What causes fights and quarrels among you?”

Paul urges us to “Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly:” and among the several sins listed is “greed (which is idolatry).” Because we - and all that we have - belong to God, and one day God will demand our lives from us.

But for now we lift our eyes to the things of God, who leads us with cords of kindness, with bands of love. And because this is who He is, we can be who we are: dead to sin and alive to Christ, with the help of the Holy Spirit.