

**INTRODUCTION:**

Those of you who work in education  
 would attest  
     that one of the great joys  
         of working with young people  
             is that they are typically a fount  
                 of honesty                  and optimism. 😊

And I say that knowing full well,  
 That we can collectively  
     think of exceptions  
         to that statement!

That being said,

One of the conversation starters I would often enjoy using  
 Whenever I would talk with University or Secondary School students  
     Was *"Why do you study so hard?"* or  
         *"What are you working towards?"*  
 And usually, they respond with something along the lines of  
     Getting a good GPA  
         Then I'd probe further,  
             And ask, *"why do you want a good GPA?"*  
 So they can get into a good school,  
     Or so they can get a good job.  
 Then, I'd ask, *"But why do you want to get a good job?"*  
     At this point, they usually look a little annoyed  
         They will say something like:  
         *"because I want to make enough money to buy things  
         such as a car and a flat, etc.  
         Or so that I can help support my family."*

So this point,  
     I'd press further and ask,  
         *"and then what?"*

By this time, most people are a bit confused at the line of reasoning,  
 but those who are honest and self-aware  
     will say, *"because I want to get married  
     and have kids and live a comfortable life."*

Finally, I ask, *"and then what?"*  
     This is when they usually pause a bit  
         and say, *"then... I eventually get old and die."*

It doesn't always go this way and I don't always press so far.

But I hope this little conversation  
     Illustrates just how easy it is for us  
         To live life  
             In our own self-centered universe.  
                 It's not that any of those were bad aspirations.

But the problem is that everything they are doing in life  
     ends up minimizing God's greater plan for them.

How many of us are the same way?

We get up in the morning  
     and do the same things over and over again,  
         until we come home and then we sleep,  
             just to wake up and repeat the same process.

Whether it is with our careers,  
     our relationships with others,

or even with our future,  
we are in some ways all trying to live lives  
that revolve around ourselves.  
We forget that we are created for God's glory,  
and that means we are to pursue God's purposes  
because He has created us for something greater.

Sadly, for many of us,  
it is this self-centered pursuit of purpose  
that causes us to be less fulfilled  
and less generous.

Only when we realize  
the significance of the Gospel,  
which demonstrates God's generosity  
through the best gift of His Son Jesus Christ  
Only then, can we be generous.

In **John 3:16**, it says, "*For God so loved the world, that He gave his only Son...*"

Because God has set the example for generosity  
through the gift of His Son,  
we need to ask ourselves,

**<S>** "*How do I grow in my generosity as I reflect on the generosity of God?  
How can we use our time, talents and treasures for a greater purpose  
instead of selfishly using them for ourselves?*"

When we gain perspective on eternity,  
it helps to bring us back to what is important.  
Also, when we begin to understand  
the temporality of our possessions  
and the fleetingness  
of the things that we desire,  
we start to realize how important it is  
to have a heart of generosity.

Therefore, today, I want to share **ONE THING**  
for you to remember in my message.

### **<S> Our perspective on eternity fuels us in our generosity**

There are 2 things that we must remember  
about how our perspective on eternity  
fuels our generosity:

#### **<S>I. Generosity flows from our significance in Jesus**

**<S>** Luke 12:13-15, says,

*"Someone in the crowd said to him, 'Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.' But he said to him, 'Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?' And he said to them, 'Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.'"*

As Jesus went from village to village to ministering to people,  
He drew large crowds due to His growing popularity.  
In verse 13, we see a crowd gathering  
and that someone decided to ask Jesus something.

The person said,  
“Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”

Now, in biblical times,  
people would often call upon rabbis or teachers  
to help make decisions,  
especially about legal matters.

The reason for this is that  
the rabbis knew how to apply  
the rabbinical law to various situations.  
In this particular instance,  
the man was trying to settle an inheritance issue  
with his brother.

### <S> Jesus looks at the heart

Interestingly,  
Jesus proceeds to ask the person a question in verse 14.  
He asks, “Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?”

What Jesus knew  
that no one else picked up on  
is that regardless of the legal judgment,  
the man’s greed wouldn’t be addressed.

Too often, we find ourselves in the same situation.  
We can bring up various issues about others,  
but deep in our hearts we have the same issues.  
This is why in the Beatitudes (Matthew 5-7),  
Jesus taught about the importance of the heart  
rather than the right external actions.

Jesus was addressing the self-righteousness of people’s hearts,  
especially those of the Pharisees  
and the teachers of the Law,  
who thought that they WERE obeying the Law.

But Jesus clearly showed  
that even though the Pharisees externally observed the Law,  
their hearts were just as sinful  
as those who did not follow the Law.

BTW, I just want to throw in a **plug for the restart of our Adult Discipleship Classes**.

We will be **starting on 26 March** with a class ON the Beatitudes.

That will be at 9:30-10:30 on the 3rd Fl in room 379A.

Stewart and Mark will be the leaders of that class

So you don’t want to miss that.

Come early

And you’ll be in prime position

To enjoy the Coffee and Tea fellowship

Which has started today,

So do stay afterwards

For some time of fellowship

After the service.

Now, this is not intentional,  
But speaking of what goes into your mouth...

This is why **Matthew 15:11, 16-20 (ESV)** says,

**<S>**“**11** *it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person.*’ ... **16** *And he said, ‘Are you also still without understanding? 17 Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled? 18 But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. 19 For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. 20 These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone.’”*

It is a heart matter,  
not a behavioral, external matter.

It is the heart that produces the sinful actions and idols in our lives.

Timothy Keller in his book, **<S>** *Counterfeit Gods*, writes,

*“The human heart is an idol factory that takes good things like a successful career, love, material possessions, even family, and turns them into ultimate things. Our hearts deify them as the center of our lives, because, we think, they can give us significance and security, safety and fulfillment, if we attain them”* [Timothy Keller, *Counterfeit Gods*, p. xiv].

Looking back at the story,

after asking the man the question,  
Jesus mentions a warning against covetousness  
and reminds him of a very important principle.

That life is more important than material things,  
and the real problem is with our hearts with the sin of covetousness.

### **<S>**What is covetousness?

The Cambridge Dictionary defines, “**covetousness**” as: **wanting to have something too much, especially something that belongs to someone else.**

This is why the word, “covetousness”

is also linked to words such as,  
“greed,” “avarice,” and “jealousy.”

It is that uncontrolled desire  
and longing to amass material gain  
or the use of these gains  
– money, possessions, success, status, power, or people’s approval.

This is a self-centered lifestyle  
because we are never satisfied with what we have,  
but rather,  
we think that the more we have,  
the more we will have of significance,  
security, and satisfaction.

This kind of mindset or philosophy of life  
hinders us from having a heart of gratitude  
and generosity.

And It strips us from a life of contentment.

I remember **my first trip** to Hong Kong.

I had just finished my first short-term mission trip.

And after it ended,

I spent a few additional days here in the city.

It was a fun time with some of my teammates  
spent just hanging out  
and relaxing with food jaunts  
and shopping galore!

Well, one of those shopping excursions  
brought me to the outdoor stalls  
of the **Ladies Market**,  
over in Mongkok.

And as a naive American,  
my eyes expanded 5x out of my eye sockets,  
as I saw the stalls and stalls of products.  
Polo shirts with that famous horse logo on it,  
chunky watches emblazoned with that "G" on its sides  
and countless other things  
that simply confirmed that Hong Kong  
was truly a shopper's paradise.  
And to top it off,  
everything was going for ¼ of the price that I'd find in the US!

Now, those of you who have been to the Ladies market  
or other similar venues will know,  
That these items were so cheap  
Because they weren't the real thing!  
They were knock-offs!  
That horse, instead of 4 legs, they seem to only have 3!  
That wasn't really a "G" on that watch,  
It was a bold printed "6"!  
In my excitement to be able to purchase something  
That was projected an image of something that it wasn't,  
My covetousness began to show.  
I too was guilty of desiring to project something  
That I wasn't.  
Sadly, those items were merely imitations of the real thing,  
But what they revealed was all too real.  
A Heart of covetousness.

The only way to overcome a heart of covetousness  
is for Jesus to transform our hearts.  
He is able to take a selfish heart  
and make it into a heart that is generous.  
We must remember that generosity flows  
from our significance in Jesus.

When we look at Jesus's statement in **verse 15b**:  
*"for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions,"*  
it is a good reminder that having more is not always better.  
The New Living Translation of **verse 15b** says,  
*"Life is not measured by how much you own."*

### How about us?

Do you have a spirit of covetousness  
glaringly evident in your life?

Have you have allowed your selfishness  
to hinder you from having your heart  
overflow with generosity?  
When was the last time you placed your significance on Jesus  
rather than the things that you possess or experienced?  
It is easy to make our significance  
dependent on what we have  
or what we do.  
But we have to allow our significance in Jesus  
to overflow in our generosity.  
Not only does generosity flow from our significance in Jesus,  
but our generosity flows from our **satisfaction** in Jesus.

## <S>II. Generosity flows from our satisfaction in Jesus

<S> In **Luke 12:16-21**, it says,  
*“And he told them a parable, saying, ‘The land of a rich man produced plentifully, and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’ And he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.’ But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”*

We notice that after Jesus warns the man about covetousness,  
He then proceeds to tell the people a parable.  
Parables were Jesus’s way of telling simple stories  
in order to highlight the point  
that He wanted to share,  
as well as to address an issue in the person’s heart.  
There are several things that we notice about the person  
and the situation in the parable:

### 1) <S> **There was an abundance.**

It is important to note that **this person was rich**  
because of his ownership of a piece of land.  
Generational wealth is passed down through real estate.  
That is true in every culture and every country  
And we here in HK  
Are very familiar with that concept.

For this man,  
it was not just owning a piece of property,  
but in verse 16,  
we see that his land produced an abundance of crops.  
When you have an abundance,  
it is easy to have a false sense of security.  
Sometimes we think that we have obtained things on our own.  
This can hinder us in our walk with God.  
The Apostle Paul reminded Timothy in **1 Timothy 6:6-10**,

<S> *But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into*

*many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.*

So, the first thing we learn about this man in the parable  
is that he was in abundance.

2) **<S>**There was an assessment.

As the story continues,  
we see that the man realized that with all of his abundance,  
he had no place to put his crops.

From a secular perspective,  
This was a good problem.  
As the farmer assessed the plentifulness of all that he had,  
he decided to do something.  
Instead of seeing his abundance of wealth  
as an opportunity to be generous toward others,  
he saw it as an opportunity to gain even more wealth.  
The man did not have an eternal perspective on things,  
and just wanted more,  
thinking that it would last forever.

Sometimes,  
some of the wealthiest people  
desire to have more  
because they think that having more  
will give them more significance or satisfaction.  
But rarely is this the case.  
Instead,  
it is all a smokescreen  
or a mirage  
that does not fully deliver on its promise.

Jesus taught his disciples to pray  
and ask God for their daily bread,  
which teaches us to depend on God for everything,  
even our daily sustenance.

This should remind us of what the writer of Proverbs said  
in **Proverbs 30:8-9 (ESV)**,

**<S>***“Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches;  
feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny you and say, ‘Who  
is the LORD?’ or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God.”*

God wants us to know that our greatest need is for Him and for us to fully trust Him for our  
daily needs. D.A. Carson in his book, A Call to Spiritual Reformation, writes,

**<S>***“If God had perceived that our greatest need was economic, he would have sent  
an economist. If he had perceived that our greatest need was entertainment, he  
would have sent us a comedian or an artist. If God had perceived that our greatest  
need was political stability, he would have sent us a politician. If he had perceived  
that our greatest need was health, he would have sent us a doctor. But he perceived  
that our greatest need involved our sin, our alienation from him, our profound  
rebellion, our death; and he sent us a Savior” [D.A. Carson, A Call to Spiritual  
Reformation: Priorities from Paul and His Prayers, p.109].*

We learn that this man had an abundance  
and then made an assessment,  
and now, he comes up with an action plan.

3) **<S>There was an action plan.**

The man says, *“I will do this.”*

He makes the decision to tear down his barns  
and build larger ones,  
where he can store all his grains and goods.

The action plan for this man

was to make more room for his goods.

In the midst of this situation,

the parable reveals the man’s philosophy of life,

which was based on some wrong assumptions.

This is why his thinking was flawed in a few ways.

**<S>First of all, the farmer assumed that he was going to live for a long time.**

In **verse 19a (NLT)** it says,

*“And I’ll sit back and say to myself, ‘My friend, you have enough stored away for years to come.’”*

The Message translation says,

*“and I’ll say to myself, Self, you’ve done well! You’ve got it made and can now retire.”*

**<S>2nd, the farmer mistakenly assumes that his material possessions would bring satisfaction to his soul.**

This is why **verse 19b (NLT)** says,

*“Now take it easy! Eat, drink, and be merry!” or*

*“Take it easy and have the time of your life!”*

To these two assumptions, Jesus shares God's perspective:

God responds by saying in **verse 20**,

*“Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?”*

In many ways,

the fool is self-sufficient,

thinks they have everything,

and fails to consider the brevity of life.

The fool forgets the limited time

they have on earth

and fails to see that

when they are about to die,

their possessions can do nothing for them.

**<S>The writer of James says in **James 4:13-17 (NLT)**,**

*“Look here, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we are going to a certain town and will stay there a year. We will do business there and make a profit.’ How do you know what your life will be like tomorrow? Your life is like the morning fog—it’s here a little while, then it’s gone. What you ought to say is, ‘If the Lord wants us to, we will live and do this or that.’ Otherwise you are boasting about your own pretentious plans, and all such boasting is evil. Remember, it is sin to know what you ought to do and then not do it.”*



When people are on their deathbeds,  
it is amazing how they do not think about their possessions,  
but rather they focus on people  
and things that matter the most.  
We should not assume  
that we are in control of our lives  
because of the brevity  
and the uncertainty of life.

**This is why we must trust in God with our future.**

Craig Evans writes in his commentary on the Gospel of Luke,  
<S>“*The man is implicitly selfish. He does not see this abundance as an opportunity to help those needing food. Rather, he hoards his plenty and then relaxes under the assumption that his troubles are over. Herein lies his folly. The day will come, often sooner than expected, when all persons will have to stand before God and give an account. All that the fool will have to show for his life will be bigger barns crammed with food, food that will be enjoyed by others now that he is dead. Rather than giving away his surplus, and so laying up treasure in heaven, he has selfishly and greedily hoarded his worldly goods with the result that in the end he does not even benefit from them*” [Craig Evans, Luke, p. 196].

Through this parable,  
Jesus reminds us that it is easy to store up earthly riches  
but completely neglect our relationship with God.  
This is why Jesus closes out the parable  
by stating that the person who,  
“lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God,”  
That person is not only the fool,  
but will face an unexpected death,  
amounting all their wealth to nothing.

<S>But what does it mean to be “rich toward God”?

It simply means for us to acknowledge gratefully  
that everything we have comes from God,  
and then making the effort  
to use what He gives us  
for the good of others  
and for the glory of God.

We have to keep in mind that it is not a sin to be wealthy,  
but it is a sin to make wealth your idol or god.

The Apostle Paul reminds us in <S>Colossians 3:5,  
“Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.”

He also mentions the problem is not money itself but the love of money.

<S>1 Timothy 6:9-10

“Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”

There is something about wealth  
that can make us either generous  
or selfish,  
which reveals what is truly in a person's heart.

**<S>In Matthew 6:33, Jesus says:**

*"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."*

As we seek God and His Kingdom,  
He will watch over us.

The world can offer us an abundance of things,  
but we will slowly begin to realize  
that it will never fully satisfy us.  
We see this truth from people  
who have everything  
but still feel empty  
and overcome  
with a sense of meaninglessness.

Even the writer of Ecclesiastes wrote on this understanding in

**<S>Ecc 5:10**, *"Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless."*

**<S>HOW ABOUT US?**

Have we forgotten the brevity of life?

Do we really understand  
that we are not in control of our lives,  
and no matter how much we have  
on this earth,  
we will never be able to take it with us  
when we die?

When we are not able to find  
true satisfaction in Christ,  
we will try to find it  
in so many other places and things.

How generous have you been with your resources?

When we have a perspective on eternity,  
it will fuel us in our generosity.  
Generosity flows from our satisfaction in Jesus.

**<S>The ONE THING: Our perspective on eternity fuels us in our generosity**

Let us not just be listeners of the Word but doers.

So here are some next steps for us to reflect on and apply into our lives.

**NEXT STEPS:**

**<S>1) REMEMBER the Gospel.**

The Gospel is not just about the moment of salvation.  
It is also something  
that we need to remind ourselves of  
every single day.

This helps us to keep in perspective

that everything we have  
and all that we have experienced  
is because of His grace and mercy.  
We are truly undeserving  
of any of God's blessings.  
The more we internalize the Gospel,  
the more we will be able to live a life  
of generosity, gratitude, and humility.

**<S>2) *REPENT of our self-centeredness.***

When by His grace,  
God shows us our self-centeredness or selfishness,  
we must turn to Jesus in repentance.  
Repentance is an act of acknowledging  
that we have fallen short and rebelled against God.  
It shows that we need His forgiveness  
and that we need to realign our priorities.  
When we repent,  
we are recommitting to the truth of Jesus  
because He is the only One  
who can fully satisfy  
and give us significance.  
May we not settle for imitations,  
but instead desire the real thing.

**<S>3) *RESPOND to God's generosity.***

As we understand God's generosity more deeply,  
may our hearts be more encouraged  
to be generous to others.  
We must remember that  
we are only able to use our resources to bless others  
because God is the true Owner of all things.  
It is His generosity,  
which God demonstrated  
by giving us His Son Jesus Christ,  
that allows us to receive all things.  
As we understand God's generosity towards us,  
it enables us to be generous to others.  
By God's grace,  
may we find avenues  
in which to express our generosity.  
This is why we include a time for the collection of tithes and offerings  
In our service.  
Now, its great if you've already included this  
As an auto-payment directly from your bank account.  
That is a great way to streamline  
The process.  
But I want to encourage you to remember that your response  
Is to God's generosity.  
By giving,  
Out of the resources God has placed  
In your stewardship,  
We can participate in God's cycle of blessing others.

The Tithes can be considered what is intended for all the ministries  
Going on at AIC.  
And the offerings, for specific designated ministry purposes.  
Missions, special projects, that kind of thing.  
So in either case,  
Whether its auto pay, or here in person,  
And hopefully soon, other online payment options.  
We're actively exploring that  
With the transition to the new entity.  
Whenever we give,  
We are responding to God's generosity.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

They say that *imitation is the greatest form of flattery*.  
I'm not going to debate the veracity of this.  
But we should never be fooled by what is not the real deal.  
Our takeaway from this parable  
Is not just a money management approach  
It is a heart formation call  
And that something that only Jesus can do.  
As we sit at his feet,  
And as we drink from the Living Water,  
As we learn from our Master,  
What is formed in us,  
The Spiritual formation that occurs  
Truly begins to make us more like our Lord and Savior.

#### **<S>Philippians 2:6-8**

*Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!*

When we reflect on what Jesus gave up  
in order to show His generosity towards us,  
we should be moved to become  
more like Him in our generosity.  
As we grow in having an eternal perspective on things,  
may we gain a greater generosity for the glory of God.

#### **Prayer & Benediction: Ephesians 3:20–21**

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.