

JJ¹

From the first time the guy who had more borrowed to the man who had less, mankind has been in the business of loans. Kids, when you ask really nice, you might get loans from your parents. There's something you really want, but don't have enough money saved up yet to buy it yourself. You ask mom and dad to help you out. Now, do they just give you the money? Probably not. They loan it to you. That means you use their money to buy that thing, but it's never really your money because eventually you pay it back.

Today we're shown that the loans we have in our life aren't just the ones we have from banks to pay for cars, houses or other things. Today we're reminded that all our possessions and our very lives are **JUST ON LOAN**.

Picture the setting. Thousands of people had gathered to hear Jesus teach. But there was a man who wasn't interested in what Jesus had to say. His heart and mind were consumed with something else. "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me!" Jesus replied, "Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?"

We might find Jesus' response odd. We might think that this man has a legitimate request. Apparently he felt as though his brother was cheating him out of his inheritance. We also might find Jesus' response odd because here he was, the one who has all authority in heaven and on earth is saying he doesn't have the authority to judge this matter! But we know by Jesus' response that Jesus' point isn't about whether or not he has authority to judge in this matter. Jesus has come to be the mediator of an eternal inheritance. Jesus is also revealing this man's heart and his confusion over possessions.

In essence, Jesus says: "Stop wasting your time and mine with your sinful greed. If your brother in his greed will not share the inheritance, so be it! Don't let yourself be caught up in his sin as well, for if you do your life will be consumed with it, and with it your faith. Greed is idolatry. Only a fool would continue to grumble, complain and seek after such things."

Then Jesus gives a very stern warning, but notice the warning isn't directed at just the man who made this foolish demand. Jesus turns and speaks to the crowd gathered there! "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abun-

¹ JJ is the acronym for *Jesus Juve*, which is Latin for "Jesus Help". It is a short prayer used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the beginning of their work.

dance of his possessions!" And to make his point painfully clear he tells this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. 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 all **my** grain and **my** goods. And **I'll** say to **myself**, "**You** have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.'"

What this man did kind of sounds like the efforts we make to save up for retirement. Maybe you have a 401k or have simply set an amount aside every paycheck into a "nest egg." What's wrong with this, you ask? Nothing in and of itself. In this country a person almost has to do this in order to survive the final years of life. The problem isn't in having a lot. The rich man in the parable was blessed with a good crop. He didn't make his money being a rascal. The problem is how we view what we have. The sin Jesus addresses today is the sin of both poor and wealthy and everyone in between.

The problem we have is that we fail to realize that everything we have and even our very lives are **JUST ON LOAN** and are therefore to live our lives accordingly.

We see the rich man's problem just in the way he talks. Did you catch it? It shouldn't be too hard to see. We talk the

same way. 12 times the man in the parable talks about *himself* and *his* possessions! Then he summarizes his greed saying, "Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry." But do you notice what he leaves out of that ancient frivolous phrase which is a perversion of Solomon's words from Ecclesiastes? "...for tomorrow we die."

God's response? "You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?"

When God says, "your life will be demanded from you," he uses a Greek word that in its basic use means "to call back a loan." If you have a loan right now, or simply owe somebody money, what would happen if the bank or person said, "Okay, it's been long enough. We want our money! Now!?" You would probably be in a whole lot of trouble! The reason you still have the loan or mortgage is because you don't have the money to pay it back. To have your loans called back right now could ruin you!

Now consider the spiritual ruin Jesus is warning us about—forgetting that all our possessions and even our very lives are on loan from God. The ruin is the ruin of the eternal debtors prison! That is why Jesus says, "This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God."



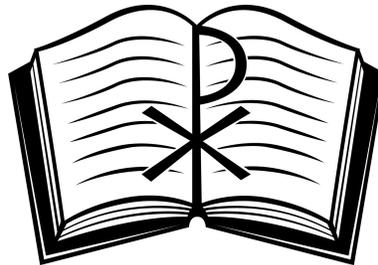
Are you filled with pride because of the car sitting in your garage, thinking to yourself, "Look at what I bought!?" Are you filled with pride as you look at your house saying, "Look at what I built!?" Do you pridefully look at the trip you recently took and say, "Look at where I went!?" Do you pridefully look at the abilities you have in sports, work or craftsmanship and say, "Look at what I've done!?" You and I, we do this all the time, building ourselves up and forgetting the one who gives us all these things on loan to be used to his glory, not our own.

Have you found yourself in arguments with family members over an inheritance? Don't be a fool! Let it go! Have you found yourself thinking you'd be happy if you just had that one thing you really want? Don't be a fool! Let it go! Have you sought to gain a larger income because then you'd have a higher standing in society or you think that life would be better? Don't be a fool! Let it go! Jesus says to you, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions!"

Solomon learned that all this stuff is meaningless. He learned that life itself is meaningless if the pursuit and collection of earthly things is our ultimate goal in life. Why? Because God does not bless man's efforts when he pursues the things of this world apart from him. In fact, this life *is* meaningless apart from him!

Earthly wealth can be a great blessing from God, but as soon as we look to that earthly wealth as the source of our comfort, happiness and security, we have committed idolatry and have become a fool, forgetting that it's **JUST ON LOAN**. For this, our very lives should be demanded of us right here, right now.

God longs for you to find what alone gives meaning to this life and our existence among all this meaninglessness. God longs for you to see that it's **JUST ON LOAN**. God wants you to know that one day he will call back his loan on your life and he wants you to be ready for it.



This is why God has shown us great mercy. He sent his Son to speak to this man, the crowd and us today so that we'd see it's all **JUST ON LOAN**.

Unlike us, Jesus always guarded himself against every kind of greed, even though he often endured great poverty. He didn't even have a home of his own! (Lk. 9:58) By doing this and all things perfectly, Jesus was able to give us our greatest treasure—his life in exchange for ours! Because Jesus has done this he has set us free from all sins, even greed. He did this so that we could gladly obey the Lord's command to "set [our] minds on things above, not on earthly things." (Col. 3:2) And Paul tells us why we are able to do this. "For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God." (Col. 3:3)

Paul is saying that when Christ died on that cross for all our sins it is as though we died upon that cross! And through God's gift of faith we "have been raised with Christ!" (Col. 3:1a) God has blessed us by providing us with the eternal needs of sins forgiven and eternal life.

By faith, Solomon understood that true happiness in this life is found in living this life as though the life to come could come at any moment. This means that as we recognize what God has given we are rich toward God in every way—with our time, our abilities and our riches. We are rich toward God as we recognize that every earthly blessing we have is meant to be used in a God-pleasing way. We are also rich toward God as we give thanks to him by returning to him a portion of what he has given.

Friends, remember that it's all **JUST ON LOAN**. Don't be foolish like the rich man who thought his security for the future was in his earthly possessions completely ignoring his security for eternity. Recognize your earthly blessings for what they are—gifts that God has given on loan—gifts he gives to be used in service to him. Cling to the riches given to you by faith, riches that are not on loan but are given as an eternal possession. Amen.

SDG²

² SDG is an acronym for *Soli Deo Gloria*, which is Latin for "To God Alone Be The Glory". This is a statement of humility used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the end of their work to let themselves and others know that it isn't about getting glory for themselves, but about giving all glory to God.