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pronouns, “I,” “me,” and “my” fill the passage. Notice that the landowner’s concern is for himself. This type of self-centeredness is contrary to the teachings of Scripture and is not part of the Good News Jesus proclaims. God’s economy is not about self-gain,

nor storing up riches. It instead calls us to help each other.

The world’s economy is predicated on scarcity. We store up diamonds and gold—arbitrarily precious things we desire to accumulate. But Jesus teaches that these things truly have no value; they are as common as the sand on a beach. In God’s Kingdom there is no scarcity, and we discover an abundance of love. His precious “things” are people. His economy draws on a never-ending supply of “love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23). As Christians, we can tap into this never-ending supply of love—a love demonstrated through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. God’s kingdom is for all, and the currency is a love which is shared and not hoarded up in barns.

I came across an anonymous quote that sums up this kind of Gospel stewardship and how we can participate in God’s Kingdom, “When you have more than you need, build a longer table,” not a bigger barn.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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The STEWPOT

A POTPOURRI OF PRACTICAL IDEAS to help you become a better steward

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BIGGER BARNES

BY NATE FURNESS

Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.” But he said to him, “Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?” And he said to them, “Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.” Then he told them a parable: “The land of a rich man produced abundantly. And he thought to himself, ‘What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?’ Then he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull 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, ‘You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God” (Luke 12:13-21, NRSV).

Recently, I built a small 8’ x 12’ shed in my backyard. I imagined it storing tools, bikes, holiday decorations, and many other household items—a small barn to solve my organization troubles. Now that it is filled, I wish to build a bigger one. With the additional space, we’ve found more things to collect, and we keep these possessions because someday we may need them. What do you squirrel away in attics, garages, and barns? What do we really need? As we consider Luke 12:13-21, we must ask the question: Will a bigger barn help?

For those who know the Gospels, the answer to the question about “bigger barns” seems obvious. Yet many of us spend our lives accumulating things—things that

STEWARDSHIP is a total lifestyle. It involves our health, time, talents, environment, relationships, spirituality, and finances.

will rust and will be eaten by moths. We have closets full of clothes which we no longer wear, garages filled with boxes that haven't been opened in years. Instead of sharing this abundance we, like the rich man in the parable, build bigger barns, because someday we may need it all.

I have a box in my shed labeled "electronics." This box is filled with outdated cords, connectors, and plugs. I found four computer connectors from 20 years ago, allowing me to plug in devices I no longer own. Instead of purging these items, I hang on to them with the trite, nostalgic sense that they may still have some value. So instead of emptying the box and sharing with others, I add more devices and more cords to the time capsule hidden in my barn.

**And so it goes; fill one box, get another.
Fill that, too, and then build a bigger barn.
My priority to organize shifts to storing up
and sealing away.**



And so it goes; fill one box, get another. Fill that, too, and then build a bigger barn. My priority to organize shifts to storing up and sealing away.

I am encouraged to build bigger barns because the world we live in favors those who have more stuff. We implicitly believe that "bigger" and "more" are better: bigger houses, bigger cars, bigger garages, and bigger bank accounts. If you have more, you're doing it right. We see this concept in big business, politics, and even within the church. It appears as though those who have the most money and stuff also make the most rules. When Jesus is asked to solve a dispute over the issue of inheritance, the questioner may be looking out for their own economic and political advantage. Jesus' response in verse 15 confronts the accepted practices of this world's economics, in which the more one has, the more advantages they command. He plainly states, "One's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions." God's economy is not based on the stock exchange, the GDP, the price of gold, or how many sheds are in one's backyard. God's kingdom is not built upon the economic principles of this world, but on a new economy: God's economy. God's economy is not about "personal abundance and possessions," but rather people. Jesus did not come to save Jerusalem, the Temple, Rome, or the various man-made institutions. Jesus came to save people (John 3:16).

As a pastor, I have had the honor of talking with people near the end of their lives. In every case, as the person reflects on their life experience, no one has ever said, "I wish I had more stuff." They regard the relationships they had. They are thankful for their spouse, their children, and grandchildren. They often talk about their church family and the love they have for their brothers and sisters in Christ.

Think now about what is most important to you. Is it an outdated box of electronics? A bigger barn? Do you need more things, or people and relationships? I'd suggest that for nearly all of us, what is most important are the people that God has placed in our lives.

We should note that within the parable of "The Bigger Barns," the personal



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