

# Tethered To God

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Preacher: Pastor Scott Johnson

[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning. Today's reading is from Luke 12, verses 16 through 21. And he told them this parable.

The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. 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, you have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said to him, you fool, this very night your life will be demanded from you.

Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself? This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves, but is not rich toward God.

[ 1 : 03 ] This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. So let's spend some time in prayer. Almighty God, thank you for the gift it is to have this moment and have this time.

As we come with our hearts open, Lord, we have poured ourselves out to you in song and in prayer and in celebration of the baptism. We have heard your word.

And Lord, we are grateful for the movement of your spirit among us. And now, Lord, come, fall fresh on each of us. Give us something new. Light a new fire in each of us that we may carry into the world.

And that the world may see and know who you are. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. So as we said during our greeting time, we are still talking about defying gravity.

And we are talking about primarily financial gravity. This concept that is about the ways in which the needs of the world, the materialism in our culture, in our own sort of selfish desires, keep us from becoming the people that God wants us to be.

[ 2 : 17 ] That pull on each of us is the gravity we're talking about. And today we're going to talk about being tethered toward God.

Tethered toward God. So to start, let's hear again our Bible story. You know, Renee set us up really well. And this parable isn't that deep, right?

You see what Jesus is saying, and it's not too hard to discern. Now, for a little context, Jesus is teaching. And what happens is someone comes up to him and asks him to mediate a dispute between that person and their brother over the estate of their house.

And Jesus is like, that is not my job. That's essentially what he said. That is not my job. Okay? But he also offers the following.

And that's why the verse that she led with, the verse that you heard open the reading, says, and then he told them this parable. That's where we come into the story.

[ 3 : 24 ] Okay? So, Jesus tells them the story of this rich man. Because he wants to get across to the crowd and to all of us a very real problem in our lives, which is about this whole financial gravity.

So, he talks about this guy. This guy who is wealthy, who must be in some sort of farming work. And one year, his ground gives up this really great harvest.

And because it's given up this really great harvest, he looks around and says, wow, I don't even have anywhere to put all this stuff. Not only do I not have anywhere to put it, it's a real lot.

So, he says, here's what I'm going to do. I'm going to build me a bigger barn. And then I can kick back. I got it now. It's all good. Now, one of the things that's interesting about this story is that he makes this choice.

And I often wonder, remember the God we sing about in Amazing Grace? Remember the God that we talk about that's full of love? Remember that God? What must it be telling us when God leads with, you fool?

[ 4 : 44 ] That's what he says, right? That when this guy says, I'm going to eat, drink, and be merry, and God in the very next line says, you fool. Okay?

But I want you all to sit with that for a minute because that should tell us a little something about how seriously God takes this. Okay? Because God is saying, okay, you can do that.

But essentially, tonight, your earthly life is going to end. And because your life is going to end tonight, what will you really have done?

And how valuable is all that grain in your big barn really going to be? Especially to you. That's a challenge for all of us.

Right? Because that's where we struggle. Now, here's the thing. We need to hear what Jesus is teaching us and not what he's not teaching us.

[ 5 : 50 ] People will take this into certain places that it's really not really designed to take us. Now, we don't see anything that's really a problem with this guy.

Of course, he makes a huge mistake. Now, it doesn't tell us that he cheated to get this money. It doesn't tell us he did anything wrong or bad.

He had a really good year. He already started off with a certain amount of wealth. And this just increased it pretty significant. And because it does, he's ready to kick back.

Here's our challenge, folks. We talk about this thing about defying gravity. And what's really the issue here is that when this guy discovers that he has this kind of money, that he's achieved this kind of financial security, it shows us where his heart really is.

Because his choice when this happens to him is to kick back and take care of himself. It's about self-indulgence.

[ 7 : 07 ] It's about pleasure. It's about luxury and leisure at that point. Now, the issue here is not that you can't have nice things.

Jesus had plenty of people around him who had nice things. Wealth in and of itself is not the issue. The problem is what we just said. What does it show about our hearts?

In other words, as you heard me say during the greeting, what's really your focus in life? What is really your focus?

Because a lot of folks work really hard in order to achieve a certain level of security. That's what the culture teaches. We all have base needs and we know that we need to go out and meet them.

We're industrious. We get out and we do the things that we are taught to do. We do them well. We get to a certain place. And that's great. But here's the hard question.

[ 8 : 09 ] And that is if you landed in a place where you were truly secure. Where you knew you were taken care of financially.

What would your focus become? Would it be all about self-indulgence?

Would it be all about what can I do for me at this point? Because if it is, the challenge for us is what does that really say about the priority God is in our lives?

Now, remember, Jesus is not saying don't work. Jesus is not saying go out and give everything away.

He says that to somebody else, but that's a whole different story. And there are people he does call to do that. Think about St. Francis for a minute. But that's generally not to call on most people.

[ 9 : 23 ] And so if you've really listened to God about your life. And you've really tried to discern what God wants you to do.

Then the challenge becomes, well, where is my focus? Am I living the life that God has called me to lead?

Am I taking these things that God has put on me, taught me, and putting them into practice in a way that honors that God?

Because when we get to this place where gravity, especially that financial gravity, starts to take over in our hearts. The question we got to wrestle with is, okay, so how godly a life is that?

Not that you should deal without. Not that you should be homeless. Not that you can't have nice things. Now, hear me and hear me well.

[ 10 : 30 ] I say this repeatedly because I know sometimes it lands on folks differently. This is not a prosperity gospel. Okay? Do not fall into that trap. It's very different to remind you that Jesus does not want you to starve and that God will meet your basic needs.

Than to promise you that if you give a certain amount, God's going to make you prosperous. That is very different and false message. Okay? That is not what we are saying.

What we are saying is this. Is you have to look at the ways in which things of the world have taken over your very heart and mean more to you than your faithfulness to Christ.

That's the problem. Because remember what Jesus says at the end of the parable. In verse 21, Jesus says this.

This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.

[ 11 : 46 ] Hear that again. This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God. So the question you need to ask yourself.

Is again, what am I doing with what God has given me? Is this about me and my self-indulgence?

Or is this about God and the life that God is calling me to lead? That's the pull.

And it's uncomfortable. And it's uncomfortable sometimes. Because I think when we look at ourselves and we look at our lives, we have to ask ourselves, well, what am I doing with what God has given me?

Because we live in a culture that will tell us that whatever you have is not enough. There's always a newer version.

[ 12 : 48 ] There's always another thing. There's always something else you are supposed to have. And it leaves us with this sense that no matter where you are, it's not right. There's always more you're supposed to have.

That is not God's message to you. That is the last thing that God wants you to hear. What God wants you to understand is whatever you have been given, are you using it according to God's will for your life?

Nancy sang that beautiful song for us today that hits what we are trying to get at. When we think about the people who have mattered to us, when we think about the people who have been blessings on our lives, when we think about the ways in which they poured and gave, some of that may have been financial, some of it may have been time, some of it may have been energy that they just spent teaching and guiding and sitting with.

All of that. But it was what they put into the world so that they could be a blessing to others. Rich toward God.

That's what we're trying to get at. So, how do we start to do this? In the book that's the basis for this series, it's called Defying Gravity.

[ 14 : 17 ] It's by a man named Tom Berlin, who was not a bishop when he wrote the book, but he has been elected bishop. So, that's why I call him Bishop Berlin. And in the book, he gives us a really interesting example of how we can get through this challenge.

Because it's one thing for me to come up here and paint the problem for you, but I don't want you to sit in that without a direction to move. That's really the key. So, how do we get through that? He gives us a really interesting example, and it comes from history.

Now, we take for granted, living in 2023, flying across oceans. We're used to it. It happens all the time. But we have to remember, there was a time when flying across an ocean was a huge deal and hadn't been done.

So, he talks about the race to make the first transatlantic flight. It was a rich hotel owner who offered a prize for the first person who could do it, to be able to fly across the Atlantic Ocean.

Now, many of you are history buffs and know your history well enough to know who the first person to do that was. But there were people actually competing for this. And let me tell you a little bit about one of the people who competed with Charles Lindbergh.

[ 15 : 37 ] One of those competitors was a man named Rene Funk. F-O-N-C-K. Rene Funk. Now, this guy was a real contender for this because he was actually a pilot in World War I.

He was the French's version of the Red Baron. He was that good. He was a combat pilot and killed many of the enemy. And so, a leading contender to get this done.

But here was his challenge. He had all the gifts. He had all the skills. He had all the tools. However, let me tell you what Bishop Rilland says about him. That when he built his plane, here's what he did.

There were heavy chairs, mahogany tables, and a sofa that could be converted into a bed. Funk took everything, including the kitchen sink.

There was a cooking area with a kitchen. He brought cases of wine and champagne. He loaded up gifts for his friends. His plane was designed to carry no more than 20,000 pounds.

[ 16 : 42 ] Fully loaded, though, it weighed in at 28,000 pounds. Contrast that with Lindbergh. He was personally involved with every aspect of the trip.

Lindbergh was in the factory as the plane was built and made sure to keep it simple. The spirit of St. Louis had only one engine, so it could conserve fuel.

It had one seat for one pilot in order to save weight. Lindbergh famously trimmed excess paper from the edges of his navigational charts to help save weight.

There were no luxuries, not even a forward windshield. And we wonder why Lindbergh was the first to accomplish the task.

Here's the lesson, guys. When you think about the life that you want to lead for God, when you think about what God is trying to pull you to, and what God is asking you to do, and who God is asking you to be, you heard me say this during the greeting, but now is when it hits home.

- [ 18 : 01 ] The question is, what is indeed your focus? If you are committed to being that kind of disciple of Christ, if you want to leave that kind of legacy, the question you have to ask yourself is, what about all this other junk that you want to bring into this work with you?
- Or are you able to focus on your goal? Will you keep trying to do all this other stuff?
- Will you keep trying to have all these other things around you that are about comfort and indulgence and luxury? Or will you worry about having the impact on the world that God is calling you to have?
- That's the rub. And again, I want you to hear this. Because we tell that example about Lindbergh, right?
- It's not that he didn't eat. Right? It's not that he didn't have a chair. He just didn't have a padded, heavy, luxurious one.
- [ 19 : 25 ] Because he was focused on his task. Now, as we try to translate that to our own lives, that is about our own conversations with God.
- How have we listened to what God wants us to do? How have we listened to the call on each of our hearts so that we can grow into it? The key is, how do we get there?
- Because we go, well, I can't do these things. These things in my life have that kind of pull on me. They have this kind of tug on me. Well, let me show you something about how some folks were able to defy gravity.
- I'm going to go through the safety briefing real quick so I can get you in the trees as quick as possible.
- So you'll have two clips on you. And one of them is always going to be locked and one is always going to be unlocked. This is so that you're always locked into the course. You cannot detach from the course at any point until you're on the ground, basically.
- [ 20 : 45 ] So this is the key that will allow you to move throughout the course and stay safely attached at all times. So the way this works is you're going to get your unlock clip, put it over the cable, slide it under here, and get that little barrel piece and push it up in there and you'll hear a click.
- And now you are safely attached to the course. I'm coming to my first bridge or element and we'll find another tweezer. Put your clip on, attach, and now you can walk across the bridge.
- If at any point you are to slip off the bridge, your clips will catch you and you'll be fine. Banzai! Woo!
- I can tell that some of you were not digging that at all. That is not your thing.
- I feel your pain. But don't lose the lesson because that's not your thing. Because remember, there's probably a whole lot of people who would say the exact same thing.
- [ 22 : 05 ] There's no way I'm doing that. You will never get me up there. The key here is that I know some of you have probably had the joy of being asked to do things like that in some sort of corporate environment, whether you wanted to or not.
- The problem here is this, is that even though you may not want to try and engage those sorts of things, and it may not be how you choose to spend your time, the challenge is will you trust what will hold you and keep you safe?
- Because if in this particular example you see those clips that will keep you anchored to the course and let you do the thing that you don't want to do, then learn the lesson.
- Because if you're thinking that financial gravity is simply too much, I can't let go of these things. This part of my life is too important.
- It still needs my time, my energy, my money. There's no way I can give this thing up. The challenge then is are you willing to tether yourself to what will allow you to defy gravity?

[ 23 : 32 ] Because if you are able to anchor yourself in the one who calls you, if you believe that God is capable of helping you get to where God wants you to go, then yes, it will be uncomfortable.

You might not want to do it, but do you believe that God will keep you safe even though he's asking you to do something you don't want to do?

That is not a question of gravity. That, friends, is a question of faith. Can we get ourselves to that place?

Because it isn't so much that somebody's saying, well, here, give it here, and then all things will work out beautifully. That's not the issue. The issue here is can you step into where God is calling you to go even though it's uncomfortable so that God can use you in a way that will profoundly bless others?

In order to do that, you may have to let go of some of those things of self. Some of those ways in which we like to spend our time.

[ 24 : 56 ] Some of those things on which we like to spend our money. Not to give up having fun, not to do anything like so crazy as that. But if you knew that God was going to take this thing you have now said, I'm going to take it out of my category and give it to God.

If you knew that God was going to take that and turn it into something amazing in somebody else's life, would you trust God?

Would you trust God? Because that is what we are in fact being asked.

You see, friends, that pull is real. But I want you to remember this thing as I close. It seems really hard to think of that risk.

It seems almost impossible that I would be asked to let go of this thing. And I have worked so hard to have it. And what's the point of doing all this if I'm just going to give it away?

[ 26 : 12 ] Those are logical defenses. Those are things that literally come up in each of us and they stick in our gut when we have these kinds of conversations. But I want you to remember something.

That the only reason that you are able to know salvation, the only reason you are able to know resurrection, the only reason you are able to know blessing, grace, peace, and joy of any kind is because there is a God who didn't have to give you anything and has chosen to do so.

And if you understand that to be true, why then is the pull of the world so much heavier on your heart than his?

Amen. Amen. And amen. Almighty and gracious God, thank you for the gifts that you continually give.

For the ways in which you pull us away from the things that bind us. Lord God, you have a dream for each of us that would cause us to break free from the weight of this world.

[ 27 : 40 ] The things that do not truly satisfy. Lord God, we know that you look at us and see that we are indeed beautiful in your eyes.

That we are worth loving and saving even though we live in a world and in a culture that may make us believe otherwise. And you give and give of yourself to help us understand that.

Lord, let us live and love like you love. Let us not fall into these traps of indulgence. But let us be difference makers for you in a world where there is so much need.

In a world where there is so much pain. In a world where there is so much loss. Help us not to hold on with both hands so tightly.

but help us to give. Help us to love. Help us to show those whose hearts are broken that there is a God who loves like that and we are his people.

[ 28 : 54 ] In Jesus name. The one who showed us what love and giving really look like. We will pray this prayer. Amen.

Indeed living in a way that shows the world that love is who we are. That is what this is all about. Glorifying God through how we move through the world.

So I want to highlight a couple of things that are opportunities for us to live our faith over the course of the week. In your bulletin you may have discovered one of these little orange cards. So we're doing this a little different this year.

We are having a drive to get all the turkeys we need. There are multiple ministries we serve where we do Thanksgiving dinners and there are quite a few and so we need turkeys.

Quite a few of them. So our hope is to exceed our previous giving and we are launching what is just a sense of a turkey drive.

[ 29 : 49 ] Okay? So start buying turkeys, bring them in, we will make sure the people who need them get them. So not only are these for the dinners, these are for the baskets that we'll be giving away as well.

You can simply pledge on the card how many turkeys you want to give. Now we know they may not be on sale yet but I want you to pay attention to that date because they have to be thawed and prepared and all that good stuff before Thanksgiving.

So please, if you are able, our goal is to get 60, 60 turkeys. Okay? So, as you are able, please contribute and we will keep being as generous as we are capable of being.

Another thing we want to highlight is All Saints Sunday coming up on November 5th. There is a table out here that has cards on it. If you have someone who has passed away that you would like remembered in the past year, then you can fill out one of those cards, make sure it gets into one of the giving boxes or you can hand it to me directly and that way we will honor that particular person during our remembrance service on November 5th, All Saints Sunday.

Also, pay attention to our fish fry needs. We have the last fish fry coming up this Friday and we are in a bit short in some of our particular areas of ministry.

[ 31 : 11 ] So, if you can, prepare desserts. That is one area that's not had its usual full complement. If you can work in the dish room, that also does not have as many people as we need.

We also need more people on the breakdown and cleanup crew after it is over. I know I'm forgetting something. Mary will remind me. But that being said, make sure you get the clipboard and if you haven't signed up, see, here's the thing.

Sometimes folks sign up for one week and think that we've covered all of the fish fries. That does not help the leadership team in this ministry. We need to know who's going to be there. So, don't take for granted that we know that you are coming.

Please make sure you sign up so we have the bodies that we need. There's plenty else going on in your bulletin. Use it as a resource. That said, let us now receive our benediction.

God, we know that you call us to more, more than we can ever dream or imagine ourselves, and certainly more than the world promises. Let us stay tethered to you and make you and the life you call us to lead our focus.

[ 32 : 17 ] Now, in the name of God, our creator and king, and in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and our savior, and in the name of the Holy Spirit, our comforter, and our sustainer.

May God bless us now as we leave to love and serve God and all God's children. Amen.