

THE RICH FOOLS IN NIGERIAN SOCIETY: AN EXEGETICAL STUDY IN LUKE 12.16-21

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Abstract

The rich class and political leaders in the Nigerian context could be likened to the rich fool in Lukan periscope. The pursuit of material possessions with obsession has become a quandary in Nigerian Society. The study labels the rich class and politicians as Rich Fools because their greed supersedes that of the Rich fool in Jesus' parable. The former stole from government coffers while the latter got his wealth genuinely from farm produce. This study evaluates the parable of the Rich fool in Luke 12:13-21 within the framework of materialism bedeviling Nigeria. Methods of grammatical analysis, synchronic and diachronic exegesis were employed to bring out the meaning of the text and be able to apply it in the Nigerian milieu. The paper found out that Jesus' teaching in the parable despises covetousness that leads to indiscriminate accumulation of possessions; negligence to appreciate God as the source of blessings and miserliness to subscribe to almsgiving. The lesson drawn from the study cautioned Nigerians about the menace of hunting for materialism without an eschatological slant, for selfish drives at the detriment of humanity. This renders Nigerians in abject poverty. Revolutionary movements are recommended to seize the rich, recover their stolen wealth, and pass death sentences on them. Also, addiction to materialism is discouraged to evade impending judgments.

Key Words Covetousness; Luke 12:13-21, Selfishness, Nigerian society and Nigerian Rich Fools

Introduction

The study explores one of the theologies Luke underlines which encompasses the Christian reaction towards earthly possessions and management of one's resources regarding eschatology. Elaborating on this emphasis Stein asserts that Luke is an outstanding book in the NT that is focused on the Christian's association to material possessions, more than any other book (45-56). This is evident in these selected passages bothered on Christians and materialism; Lk 3:11; 6:20-21a, 34-35, 38; 8:14; 11:41; 12:13-33; 14:12-14; 16:1-15, 19-31; and 19:8. Besides his gospel, Luke addresses this motif in Acts also (Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-5:11). At this point, Luke depicts the optimistic outcomes of open-handedness and seeking first the Kingdom of God: blessings for the individual and progress for the church.

How do you deal with greed? Are you rich, engrossed in luxury, and oblivious to the needs of the poor? Do you act as if the money you can store up will guarantee your retirement? How does one become rich towards God? The Parable of the Rich Fool, which is likewise exclusive to Luke, is one of the sources he applied to climax Jesus' teaching concerning being a disciple and managing material assets. This paper assesses this parable and pinpoints eternal lessons on how to manage wealth or earthly possessions as disciples of Jesus Christ. In addition, the study examines the implication of the parable to Nigerian society.

This study intends to avail Luke's pedagogics on the rich, poor, and the responsibility of possessions in the life of each, with attention to the contexts in which they appear. In Luke, "poor" denotes above an economic position, though it definitely discourses that feature also; the concept labels a cluster of demoralized people, as well as people imprisoned, blind, hungry, crying, hated, persecuted, ostracized, crippled, and more so deceased. Luke views the poor through the lens of those who are the abandoned mass of people (Fitzmeyer 250). In corroboration to this argument, Perry opines that this parable cautions the disciples about the pointlessness of gathering wealth because materialism is strongly dispirited by Jesus since it destructively affects devotion to God (825).

Lukan Unique Parabolic Framework

This passage explicates Jesus' instruction against greed. It was provoked by a man in the crowd who wanted Him to resolve a family problem concerning a property (vv. 13-15). Jesus saw his actual problem was covetousness so he narrated a story about a rich man who had an unappeasable thirst for acquiring increasingly. This parable of the "Rich Fool" reveals principles of what transpires when people's hearts are absorbed wholly to themselves at the detriment of others. The parable offers a forthright critique of covetousness. In so doing, Green confirms that the frame basically determines the denotation of the parable; Luke 12:15 familiarizes the rich man as the archetype of gluttony, and the deduction designates that he suspended God from the picture (489).

Extant only in Luke and Thomas (Gos. Thom. 63), the parable is situated in Luke's travel narrative (9:51–19:44). Kümmel maintains that this central section of the Lukan gospel was not an original tradition. Rather it was a composition of Luke who brought together materials of different origins and fitted them into the framework of the journey to Jerusalem (133). He further contends that the Evangelist may have expanded on the situation presented in Mark 10:1; and 11:1 by rearranging disparate material. This argument does not hold water because Luke's elaborate record of the parables of Christ is consistent since nineteen of the thirty-five parables recorded in the entire Gospel account are unique to Luke. This may be attributed to literary sources unique to Luke.

Luke devises an approach of discoursing riches, poverty, and material assets, in some scenarios surprisingly. Once in a while, he does this in material exclusive to him like the parables of the rich fool in 12:1-21 and the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31. In other periscopes, he applies the same approach through additions into material from Mark or Q, as in the teachings of John the Baptist in 3:1-20 or those on affection to enemies in 6:27-36. Lukan superfluities add a Lukan nuance to these themes that should not be lost.

Make My Brother Divide the Inheritance (12:13-14)

'Someone in the crowd said to him, 'Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.' Jesus replied, 'Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?' (12:13-14)

The man presented himself as a younger brother who doesn't think he is supplied with what he deserves. Inheritance in Israel was planned to preserve land in the family, instead of forfeiting it to other tribes or individuals. Further interpretation of these laws is seen in Deuteronomy 21:16-17 and Numbers 27:8-11.

The first-born son would take double the inheritance of any of his younger brothers and would oblige as the patriarch of the family and architect of his father's legacy (Greek *kleronomia*), explicitly, real parkland. Werner Foerster, "*kleronomos*, *ktl.*," avers that "in the papyri *kleronomos* designates precisely the beneficiary of real property or possessions, while he who merely collects portable property is never termed by this name. Similarly, the concept is connected to crucial possession (TDNT 3:769). The fledgling son wants the land divided so that he gets a share, but that will diminish the quantity of agrarian land for the landholding altogether. The Greek word is *merizo*, 'divide, separate' into its sectional parts ... 'share something with someone' (BAGD 504). The elder son would somewhat keep it as it was under his father, all the brothers farming the land and assisting their relations with it, instead of dividing it up into lesser and minor pieces which each would autonomously control (Marshall522).

The reason for the younger brother's dispute over family legacy in the passage in question is undefined. Bock articulates that in that culture, relations could mutually hold their assets and share their resources for business drives (Bock 224). Nevertheless, suggestions are made, Marshall subscribes to a view that it could be an objection against an elder brother's pursuit for extra beyond what the legal system approves, or a protestation to the elder brother's craving to have a business in the running of the inheritance (522). The rejection could likewise be to investigate and refute the motive of the petitioner (Leifeld 961), or Jesus craves not to interfere in matters external to his dominion (Malina and Rohrbaugh 78). Jeremiah's deduction captures the essence of Jesus' ministry in that his response was verbalized by the fact that the ownership of inheritance is immaterial to the life of the Age

to come (165). Towing in a different direction Bailey asserts that instead of replying to an egotistic cry for fairness, Jesus addressed the act of the selfishness beneath the scream (Bailey 70). Barclay and Stacy argue that the man was not contrary in lodging his complaint to Jesus since it was normal at that day for people to ask religious teachers or rabbis to settle their disagreements (164; 286). Barclay and Stacy might be correct but at the same time, there was a breach of protocol since Jesus' teaching was ongoing. Why couldn't he wait for the matter to be addressed thereafter? Stacy further stressed that the purpose behind this is that the law of the land was embodied in the Torah, and since Israel was a theocracy, who was in a healthier position to settle quarrels than the authorities on the Scriptures, the rabbis? (286). Jesus' acknowledgment as a rabbi with great authority made the man approach him with his family dispute (Lk 4:32, 36; Mt 7:29).

The Greek word *eipe* (εἶπε) used is in the imperative. So, the man is commanding Jesus to order his brother to divide the inheritance with him. He did not request that Jesus act as judge; he was giving a command to the Lord. It was sarcastic because the approach to Jesus in a way shows that he valued the authority of Jesus but the motive and the break in a conversation signifies mannerism.

In responding to the man, Jesus uses the noun vocative singular masculine of *ἄνθρωπος* which is *ἄνθρωπε*. Fitzmyer portrays a reproving tone, indicating unfriendliness (969). Plummer agrees with Fitzmyer on this point (322). Jesus' words show that the man's appeal was in error. The spotlight on this further expressed as stated by Morris, the man did not recognize Jesus as Messiah, but only as a teacher, and Jesus would not approve his brash demand. He could have found a chance to speak, but his demand was granted. What he received eventually was far more than he requested, but undoubtedly what he merited. (Morris 212). You can factor in the error as Jesus has been teaching for some time about the Kingdom. Abruptly, someone jumps into the conversation and interrupts the whole group with a question on firmness that Jesus makes straight the man's legal affairs. It was impolite and inappropriate.

Foremost, Barnes submits that Christ's rejection was because the chief determination of His work was not to resolve civil matters that the laws could settle (80). Then from a different angle, the response is approached from the question of enthusiasm of the younger brother (Leifeld 961). The mood of the expression--the imperative, which in this setting could be seen as a command, may point to this. The phrase on making demands in verse 13 reads, "Teacher, command my brother to divide the inheritance with me." Bock suggests that this position from the viewpoint of the petitioner, acknowledges confident authority in Jesus which could empower Him to vomit such a command (343).

Jesus queries the man somewhat unswervingly, as one who has interrupted him and made unwarranted demands. He asks the man who has chosen Jesus as judge of this case. Jesus uses the words "judge," Greek *krites*, which implies one who reaches a decision, and passes judgment, a judge (BAGD453), and "arbiter," Greek *meristes*, 'divider, arbitrator' *Meristes* is the noun form of the verb *merizo* used in vs. 13, "divide" (BAGD 505). John Nolland opens up by presenting a convincing observation on the purpose why the Lord declined the man's demand. It is most probable that Jesus dismissed the man's request because he was commandeering Jesus' authority for his private benefit. Or he was trying to use the position and authority of Jesus to gratify his greed (685). To back up this claim, Stein expounds on the negative effect of materialism, that gluttony is to be disallowed, for the meaning and goal of life are not situated in the acquiring of riches and possessions (351). Threading on the same premise, Fitzmyer points out categorically that Lord correspondingly saw the actual motive of the man. He was overwhelmed by greed (969). The declaration in verse 15 verifies the issue of greed addressed in verse 14. To buttress this assertion, Malina and Rohrbaugh attest that the implication of this verse is the traditional peasant supposition that greed is unvaryingly the fundamental reason for anybody disposed to increase riches in excess. Descriptions of *pleonexias* (πλεονεξίας) attest to a robust craving to gain more and more material possessions or to own more things than other people have, regardless of need. The word is generally translated as greed, avarice, or covetousness. More so, it is taking advantage of someone, habitually because of an enthusiasm of greed. The word is generally translated as exploitation. That is why to be rich in those days said a lot more about one's morality than one's economic status. Commonly, people thought of the rich as greedy. (Malina and Rohrbaugh 324-325, 359).

Caution on the Risks of Greed and Wealth (verse 15a)

"Then he said to them, 'Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions' (12:15). In v. 15a, Jesus cautions, 'Beware of all covetousness.' The reason why is outlined in the form of a principle in vs. 15b: 'for a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.' Jesus declares that what a person is can never be muddled with what a person has (Talbert 141; Ngele, Uwaegbute and Odo 297). Verse 15 is the transitional speech of the parable. Many scholars support that this passage was not actually Jesus' own declaration, but was a Lukan appendage (Nolland, 684-685; Fitzmyer, 968). To trace more, it is more than convincing that this is Jesus' core idea in the parable. Knowing the man's real motive, Jesus reading the man's heart cautions the disciples and the crowds against gluttony. He strengthens this by revealing that it is not natural to reason that if one has wealth in abundance, one's life is

safe and that he or she will enjoy a decent and satisfying life. Since the declaration was cumbersome to grasp the parable was narrated to shed light on the teaching.

Jesus' words explain in simple terms the evil cause underlying the man's demand which is greediness. Moreover, avarice, comparable to so many other iniquities, has a variety of different kinds, each attractive to a convinced section of men. To evade these numerous forms of gluttony, men must both "watch out" for them and "be on their guard" against them. It would appear that the first command 'watch out,'; 'beware', essentially beware barely does justice to the fore of *phusassesthe*, which is rather 'guard yourselves': it is the approach of an optimistic act to shield against an enemy (Morris 212). This specifies the necessity to acknowledge that the risk is, while the second "Be on your guard against," underlines the watchfulness desired to fight the evil for what it is. Jesus uses the instance as a teachable jiffy. The man's yearning is apparently for chattels, so much so that he will deduce to command God what he must do to achieve this wish. The mood shows there is an inordinate anger and bitterness here. The longing for justice is not off beam for God is a God of fairness. But the drive here is more than a call for justice. The man appears enveloped with the inheritance. Something else is controlling his mind. Jesus tags it, "greed" and cautions his disciples against it with an adage, and then with a striking parable. The Greek word in this context for "greed" is *pleonexia*, "greediness, insatiableness, avarice, covetousness," accurately 'a desire to have more (BAGD 667). This is a dissimilar term from the Greek *harpagē*, "robbery, plunder, greediness" used to label the Pharisees' mood in 11:39. In that setting greed encompassed hijacking what is owned by others; here it is a yearning for more. Other expressions for 'greed' are excessive or wrong acquisitiveness and avarice.

The lure to greed necessitates watchfulness, hence Jesus' cautioning words, "Watch out" (Greek *orao*) and "Be on your guard" (Greek *phulasso*, watch, guard ... guard against, look out for, sidestep (BAGD 868). Greed is first identified clearly as the Tenth Commandment, "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor" (Exodus 20:17). Covetousness is the yearning for something that one doesn't have a genuine right to, something that is owned by another person.

Life is not Wealth of Possessions (12:15b)

Consequently, instead of yielding to the appeal of the petitioner, Jesus finds pleasure in the occasion to warn on the menaces of greed. Addressing the throng which was congregated around him, he cautions, "Take heed and beware of covetousness" (Luke 12:15a). Jesus adapts the Greek expression *pleonexia*, which can be translated as "greediness", "avarice", and "covetousness." In a nonbiblical logic, *pleonexia* could be positive as in Epictetus 2,

10:9. In this setting it could signify a craving for more knowledge or holiness. Gluttony may also symbolize lust for higher social standing and an unquenchable longing for affluence (Perry 825; Green 488-9). In other words, greed drives its captives to an insatiable state where everything that matters is possession, irrespective of how it is acquired. In the context of usage, *pleonexia*, could denote the gross selfishness and extravagant wish to have more by depriving others of what is lawfully theirs. The biblical orientation to greed or covetousness is continuously undesirable (Perry 2: 825). Therefore, in the framework of usage, *pleonexia*, could denote the crude selfishness and excessive desire to have more by refuting others what is rightfully theirs.

Consistent with Bock, this angle discloses the risk of the chase of chattels. It can drive one to be unmoved by people and even lead to incorrect insight about what founds the pivotal goal of life (Bock 1150). After cautioning his disciples against gluttony, Jesus avails the purpose for this caution, because (Greek gar) 'a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions' (12:15). This is one of Jesus' motifs. "Man does not live by bread alone" (Luke 4:4; Deuteronomy 8:3). When you reflect on it, Jesus' assertion to his disciples then is a fundamental declaration even in contemporary society: "A man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." This conflicts with how our society reasons, values, and lives; the abnormal thinking is that wealthy people are more fruitful than poor people. Rich people are more vital than poor people. Affluent people are more wanted to work on public boards and commissions, since they showcase class, cash, and apparently have wisdom. Success today is standardized chiefly based on the number of degrees, wealth, salary, incentives, possessions, and publications.

Christ passes the message that happiness in life is not ascertained by the quantity of affluence one has in his custody, even if the value of life might be boosted by the stuff of luxury and well-being. Christ's sanction here is very noteworthy. It uplifts the goal and value of life above assets and wealth. The safety of life is not in accumulating possessions. This was a fundamental encounter with the original listeners and correspondingly to present-day society's scale of success. Chattels do not guarantee luxury and safety, nor elongate one's life. Accordingly, one is not to be infatuated by it.

The Rich Man's Bounty Harvest (12:16)

"And he told them this parable: 'The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop.' " (12:16)". This is a narrative about a theoretically prosperous agriculturalist. Jesus' spectators saw rich farmers in their day. They could understand this instantly. His "ground" is Greek *chora*, (χώρα) 'field, cultivated land' ... singular 'land, farm,' "(BAGD 889). Appropriately it is "the space lying between two places or parameters." (Thayer 674). It echoes like his own property, though he may have bought or chartered land from his poorer

fellow citizens. The ground is said to have "produced a good crop, Greek *euphoreo*, entails bear good crops, produce well, be fruitful. (BAGD327). Left unspoken in Jesus' parable is God's grace in triggering the land to fetch such a bounty harvest. The enormity of the field of the man that yielded the plentiful harvest appears to be underscored by the word (*chōra*) instead of (*agros*) for "land" (cf. John 4:35). The wealthy man possesses a huge field that yielded bounty harvest. Trending in that society, to be wealthy was a social and moral declaration on the same page as an economic one. It entails the authority or ability to hijack from someone who is feeble what was lawfully not yours. Being prosperous was tantamount to being avaricious (Malina and Rohrbaugh 400). In contrast, this parable does not advocate that the rich farmer had gotten the riches illegitimately or by dishonest or swindling the poor. Jesus appears to have no question about the richness. So far as the monologue of this man would reveal, there is an obsession and blindness with covetousness for wealth and materialism, whether gotten honestly or through dubious conditions. He failed the test of integrity. The rich fool is a well-off Jewish farmer who, outside his watchful preparation and calculation, had superfluous returns in his produce. The state of affairs at the turn of events necessitated the anxiety of life (verse 19). In managing this bounty harvest, his ego was demonstrated in his verdict to enlarge his storehouses to house the plentiful produce. Liefeld commented that no astute farmer or investor could reason and do lesser than the man sought to do. Jesus had no question on the means of the wealth, since there was no hint of Him being a stern farmer such as designated in James 5:4. What then was the root cause of His reproof as *aphrōn*—foolish or irrational (verse 20), it is a person who castoffs the wisdom and principles of God as the source for life (961). Barclay deduces that there is no parable so hackneyed with the words, I, me, my, and mine.... The rich fool was belligerently self-centered....When this man had extra goods, the one thing that on no occasion he pondered upon was to give any away. His unabridged insolence was the very opposite of Christianity. As opposed to denying himself, he hostilely acknowledged himself; In preference to rejoicing in sharing with the less privileged, he tried to keep it by storing it up for himself (166).

Digging deep into the mind of the rich fool Geldenhuys similarly perceives: He well-thought-out that he had the complete authority over his life and over all his properties and hence prided about 'my barns, my fruits, my goods, and my soul' (vv. 18, 19) (355). He did not respect the chattels as things loaned to him by God's grace and to be used for his own pleasure and delights. Taking into consideration the temperament of the rich fool, God discourses the man on his own realistic reputes of not giving attention to kingdom stuff or life in the hereafter, but on the priority of trivial dealings, which is his possessions (Leifeld 961). Hence, he has to leave it all, perchance to an inept beneficiary or no one specifically (Eccl 2:18-19). His deed divulges he was egocentric (Bailey 303, 304; Green 490-491). The

rich fool planning signposts a disposition whose riches are safeguarded materialistically (Gowler 208). His captivation was “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.” This is tantamount to the slogan of Epicurean and Hedonist philosophers who trumpets ‘eat and drink tomorrow you will die’.

Builder of Bigger Barns (12:17-18)

"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.'" (12:17-18). In the parable of the Rich Fool, the rich man's flaw did not lie in the fact that he was wealthy. His flaw laid in his selfish consumption of possessions. In this parable, “the man and his possessions are so intimately tied together that they are inseparable. In English translation the personal pronoun “I” shows up six times and the possessive “my” five times (“my crops,” “my barns,” “my grain,” “my goods,” and “my soul”) in the six verses of the parable” (Hultgren 109). Thinking within himself, he poured out, saying, ‘What will I do, because I don’t have room to store my crops?’ He said, ‘This is what I will do. I will pull down my barns, and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. I will tell my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years. Take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry. Nonetheless, the man's crop is overflowing, and the magnitude of the harvest has twisted a problem of insufficient granary for storage. The term is translated as "store" (NIV) or "bestow" (KJV) in vss. 17 and 18 is the usual Greek word *sunago*, "gather (in) things." It can be used generally, for fish, crops, people, etc. (BAGD 782). The expression translated "barn" is Greek *apotheke*, storehouse, barn, (BAGD 91), an apartment in which everything is stored (Thayer 61).

Since the rich farmer strategizes to "tear down" his storehouses, these are undoubtedly silos or possibly rectangular storehouses. The Greek word used here is *kathaireo*, which entails "take down, bring down, lower," then "tear down, destroy" of buildings (BAGD 386). The rich farmer's firmness to tear down his existing warehouses designates that he did not intend to raise structures on his fruitful land but somewhat put-up larger silos instead of his current ones. His wealth is far bigger than what he requires for his upkeep. Thus, in place of marketing his grain, he decides to hold the grain for the upcoming seasons when he can get higher prices. He is a smart businessman.

Idolatry in Possessions (12:19)

‘And I'll say to my-self, 'You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy, eat, drink, and be merry’ (12:19). Jesus doesn't fault him for his agricultural shrewdness but for his autonomous arrogance. The man essentially trusts that his riches will now insulate his life from poverty. God isn't in the calculation at all. The man's emphasis is

directly on possessions instead of God. Personal endings or pronouns are used twelve times in the parable, as well as the five second-person endings and pronouns in his address to his own soul. It is only at the end that a second party, God stepped in with judgment. Green hit the nail on the head by asserting that the use of language evidently signposts the emphasis of the man's decisive mission which is 'himself'. In a peasant-based economy pigeonholed by a high level of interdependence, it is appropriate to determine why this farmer maps out plans for his life in seclusion from others (490). The focus of the man on himself and his things becomes evident as well in God's question to him after he tells him his life is demanded of him: "Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?" (Luke 12:20). In his inward focus and the laying up of goods for his own security and pleasure, he has failed to be rich toward God. Accordingly, he is a fool who lives totally for himself, he dialogues with himself, he strategizes for himself, and he commends himself. Equally, the man demanding for division of inheritance triggering the parable seems to position his own advantage above his affiliation with his brother. Nonetheless, as Christ has detailed previously to his disciples, "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world and yet lose or forfeit himself?" (Luke 9:25) (Craddock 163).

To balance the equation and see this from a different perspective even poverty is not an assurance against greed. In effect, poverty is a stepping stone for covetousness for money. The author of Proverbs identifies the risks as he prays, "Give me neither poverty nor riches but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the Lord?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God." (Proverbs 30:8-9)

Foolish Policymaking (12:20)

After the man has congratulated himself on his good fortune and his guarantee of a pain-free life for the future, God speaks. "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?' " (12:20). "You fool" is Greek *aphron*, which denotes "foolish, ignorant" (BAGD 127). The word is likewise used in Luke 11:40 fixed on the Pharisees. Is the expression justified? Unquestionably, he cannot guarantee his own future. To imagine that you are clever and capable of doing so is a myth. The bigger question gazing at you is, "What if you were to die tonight?" that aside, the parable expresses a wealthy agriculturist whose soul was required of him on the very night that he had consumed upsetting only on constructing larger storehouses. Alluded to other parables, there is no harm in the act in that regard, no stealing or bill increase, no mistreatment of workers in the farmland. "the rich fool" who appears to be formulating for his retirement where he, in the end, can relax, eat, drink, and be merry failed to acknowledge God nor family, friends, neighbors and the poor. His goals

reverberate with several people who advance such a yearning for the luxury of life in subsequent years at the expense of others.

The turn of events manifests as God tags him as a fool. Death arises knocking in the parable, and God asks the rhetorical question that dangles in the cloud: “And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?” (12:20). God’s query has other disparities that all echo indefinitely like “you cannot go along with your possessions.” You came into the world with nothing and we will go out with nothing. Drawing eschatological consummation near to you, where will you be, heaven or hell? When death appears, all possessions turn out to be vanities. Nonetheless, as the wise man cautions, he has to leave them all, perhaps to an inept heir or no one in specific (Eccl 2:18-19).

Not Rich toward God (12:21)

“This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God.” (12:21). How is it going to be? This is an unexpected shock for those who fail to reason that they are mortal creatures and that a Higher Being has created him, are fools. Educated fools, perhaps, but still are fools. Nonetheless, there arises a day of reckoning. The riches in bank accounts, status, assets, and profession will be vanities. The only question staring you in the face is; are you rich toward God? Moreover, the rich man is cross-examined, “Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?” (Luke 12: 20b). This divine query is keen because the community is absent in the picture. The motivation of the rich man had been on himself as his monologue exposes. Six times he uses the ‘I’ and “my” five times (vv. 17-19). No family is cited not even those who lived around him or his staff are revealed. The rich man was bent on safeguarding his life at the moment and in the future. He thought that constructing bigger barns where he would stock and protect the richness would guarantee a safe future and he could then live his life with luxury (vs.19). Considering the nature of the rich fool God discourses him regarding his selfishness and inability to acknowledge kingdom ethics or eschatological life but on the query of ordinary businesses which is his possession (Liefeld 961).

Finishing the parable Jesus avails a submission, “So is he who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God” (Luke 12:21). To exegete these phrases “rich toward God” (*eis theon ploutōn*)? Joshua Noble digests on the passage that it is being rich but with an alignment towards God, rich in the things that matter most before God, gathering riches with God, and gathering material things to give it to God (Noble 304-5). To add flavor to this meaning, Noble asserts that it is apt to appreciate this expression as admiring a transmission of riches to God as a recipient through almsgiving (Noble 313, 316-318). As the following unit designates, Jesus underlined an eschatological perception in affluence administration regarding almsgiving. Jesus cautions his addressees to give alms and by so

doing make available for them-selves treasures in heaven that do not fail and can be pilfered nor ruined. This heaven-oriented giving would likewise disclose an alignment of the hearts of the disciples to heaven (Luke 12:33-34; cf. Luke 12:21). As far as almsgiving and monetary stewardship with divine eschatological orientation in prosperity running could be a lane to storing up possessions in heaven contrary to the erection of enormous earthly barns to store goods for selfish feasting. Egocentric attitude is discouraged while generosity to the have-nots is applauded in the Wisdom literature: "Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will reward them for what they have done" (Prov 19:17), is richness toward God. This path may form an apt use of one's goods rather than storing them in earthly storehouses for an indeterminate future like the pointless strategies of the rich agriculturalist. Equally, considerate awareness of community and almsgiving could discourage greed and the useless agenda of self-storage.

Addressing the strange disposition of the rich farmer, Gowler posits that the cultural outlook of the peasant community in the first century divulges that this rich man and those in the same shoes are flouting Jesus' call that life in the kingdom of God comprises not only treasure in heaven but likewise vertical comprehensive mutuality in our lives on earth (209). Therefore, the rich man's poverty toward God instead of being rich is displayed in the buildup of chattels for himself and the omission and negligence of the community.

Treasures in Heaven

The bigger question begging for answers is, how do you become rich toward God? In the Gospels, there is a contrast between laying up treasures in heaven against laying up treasures for ourselves. In many passages, Jesus portrays the how: "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Luke 12:32-34 cf. Matt 6:1-18; 6:19-21 Luke 16:9). Outside the Gospels, one of Pauline Epistles captures laying up treasures in heaven; "Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way, they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life" (1 Tim. 6:17-19). For Jesus to lay up treasures for heaven is by humbly living for him now. Giving to the needy, praying, fasting, doing good deeds. Greed inhibits heaven.

Implication of the ‘The Rich Fool Parable’ and Lessons to Nigerian Society

Greed, covetousness, and selfishness as portrayed in Jesus’ Parable of the Rich Fool have caused a lot of crises in the world, including in Nigeria. It is because of greed that political leaders embezzle the funds that are supposed to be used for national development for their own selfish needs. In Nigeria, there is a very wide gap between the rich and the poor. Nigerian politicians find themselves in a strong position of power and wealth due to their monopoly on the oil and gas industries in Nigeria. Many politicians own or have shares in these industries, tax revenues from the energy segment are reduced, and the profits of Nigeria's energy are not squarely shared in the country. According to Manjo, in applied expression, corruption has been prevalent in all governments or administrations in Nigeria since independence in 1960, hitherto. Under the existing fourth Republic, corruption has been graded as a plague; as both the leaders and supporters are corrupt. Subsequently, despite all the efforts required to curtail this menace, corruption remained the same, hence, has succeeded in reinforcing the nation’s bankruptcy, turning Nigeria into the poverty capital of the world. In the same line of thought, Abel Inyaregh hints at what adds salt to injury, that modern slavery in Nigeria is triggered by ignorance, corruption, unemployment, and poverty (19, 24). The devastating effect of the rich fools in Nigerian society is the worst hit because on the day of reckoning the rich fool in Jesus; parable might be better off since he did not steal but was only selfish, Nigerian rich fools steal from government coffers where they did not sow. Manjo laments this, but then the nature of corruption destroying the Nigerian state can be categorised as ‘grand corruption’ or ‘kleptocracy’, with besmirched leadership that appreciates constitutional immunity and having rheostat of all law enforcement agencies; police, the prosecutors, and the courts with whom they conspire to steal public fund (22).

In Nigeria, corruption has deprived the nation of chances for development in sensitive segments for instance road, power, health, education, rail, sewage, communication, infrastructure, and the like (Manjo 186). Examples of rich fools in the Nigerian context are epitomized by those who embezzle government funds, and poor peoples’ taxes out of greed and selfishness and stash away in home and foreign accounts for personal use. Manjov asserts that Abacha looted in 24 years, the sum of \$ 3.65 billion, and this was returned to government coffers (22). EFCC is set to prosecute ex-Governor Bello for N80 billion money laundering (Oyero Premium Times). The Secretary of the dissolved Presidential Committee on Reconciliation and Recovery of Stamp Duties Revenue, Kazaure Gudaji has described how N89 trillion from stamp duties was misappropriated and sidetracked by the former Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Godwin Emefiele (Sahara Reporters 2024). Again, Emefiele, unlawfully lodged billions of naira in foreign currencies in no fewer than 593 bank accounts in the United States, United Kingdom, and China without the

endorsement of the apex bank's board of directors and the CBN Investment Committee (Adepegba Punch). The above samples are the tip of the iceberg; thousands of the rich fools in Nigerian society who have underdeveloped Nigeria are gallivanting freely. If the truth must be told, the condemned rich fool in Jesus' parable is even better than the Nigerian rich fools. To compare and contrast, Jesus was used to impart great moral facts using great human misfortunes. It is also shown in "The Rich Fool" in Luke 12:16-21. This man virtuously earned a candid living through hard work and toil, but regrettably, he failed to grasp that God was the spring of his prosperity (Acts 14:15-17). He was not acquiescently tangled in depraved or unholy demeanor, but regrettably, he failed to appreciate that God demands not only self-restraint from evil but dynamic participation in almsgiving (Romans 2:7). Hopefully, he enjoyed plenty of wealth, but failed to use his inordinate bodily means for great spiritual advantage. The great disparity with the Nigerian rich fools is that the wealth they have accumulated and stashed in home and foreign accounts to enjoy for donkey years is stolen and worst still, they indulge in cultism, homosexuality, immoral acts, and so on. Jesus uses this story to teach wise lessons from a foolish man. We learn the significance of praising and appreciating God for our physical blessings. The man greedily gathered his wealth without appreciating God as the decisive source of "every good and perfect gift" (James 1:17). He was too selfish about where he would store his properties. This arrogance led him to a disposition of selfish thought and spiritual dormancy. Moreover, most notably, we learn of the grave sin of materialism. The Lord initiated the lesson with the caution to "beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses" (Luke 12:15). This is the key letdown of the rich fool. He was guilt-ridden of what may be the wickedest formula of covetousness. he desired his own goods. Rather than using them to alleviate the hunger of the destitute, to clothe the poor, and to comfort the sick (Matthew 25:42-43), he hoarded his goods to himself and wanted to enjoy luxury (Luke 12:19). The Lord appropriately labels him as a "fool" (Luke 12:20). His goods may have consoled his physical life, but his mismanagement of them verified his punishment in the hereafter. This is to portray the foolishness of those who lay up treasure for themselves and are not rich toward God (Luke 12:21).

The Nigerian rich fools are deadliest than the one in the parable because they hoard palliatives sent by other nations during a pandemic, they pad budgets to send so-called prayers in politicians' accounts by living large, buying SUVs hundreds of millions, share constituency allocations, yet they ask the masses to be patient and cut their expenses. The rich fools in Nigeria increase taxes for the masses and refuse to increase the salaries of civil servants who are enslaved in their own fatherland by fellow citizens (Inyaregh 17-19, 24). In the guise of subsidy, the rich fools in Nigerian society succeeded in eroding the middle class into being poor. On the other hand, religious leaders who fly in jets and wallow in

luxury take advantage of their members by using tithe to enrich themselves; they preach, 'no tithe, no heaven.'

The rich fool in Lukan pericope accumulated wealth to enjoy for many years unknown and worst still Nigerian rich fools steal to accumulate for yet unborn generations. The rich but foolish agronomist appears to be deciding his own eschatology of life and eternity by his individual guarantee of living for many years. Matthew Rindge argues that his eschatological of "many years" was initiated by greed (359). The pride in the rich fool portrays him as an atheist who was emotionally overzealous and confused there is no God so he would enjoy unending years. But helplessly death smashed his ambition as God demanded his life that very moment (12: 20a).

Conclusion

In the parable, a prosperous man stores up more riches, hoarding from his successful produce a huge storehouse of properties and materials with which he hunted to enrich himself. But he loses sight of the point of life in this pursuit of gain. He contemplates only of himself. He does not share his abundant possessions with the underprivileged and the oppressed. To break the camel's back, he deliberately ignores to reflect on the only distinct relationship that counts ultimately. He fails to remember God. Thus, when he confronts an unexpected, impromptu death (v. 20), the blankness of his rapport with God is exposed in all its austerity. Modern materialism incorporates financial, sexual, political, emotional, and the like. What this parable teaches us is that we must ponder about sharing our affluence and labouring for mutual good, and, primarily, to remember God, who is the source of all goodness, and who will call us unannounced to reckoning. Many rich fools in Nigeria oppress the masses and peasants owing to the materialistic culture that saturates the Nigerian system. The danger that materialism and excessive desire for earthly possessions pose for Nigerians is the impending doom tantamount to the end of the rich fool in Jesus' parable. Nigerians are enjoined in this study to put God first and anchor the relationship sharing with the less privileged. The care of the poor has long been a part of God's drive for his people and it is not a voluntary action.

The study found out that greed is parallel to the sin of idolatry, initiating and worshipping a false god. Paul using correlated words calls greed "idolatry": (Ep 5:5, Co 3:5). Nevertheless, in my exegesis, in the context of the parable of the rich farmer, being "rich toward God" implies eschatological alignment in the administration of affluence and possessions that includes almsgiving. Trajectory to innovative remedy the study recommends a revolutionary movement to cleanse the mess by seizing the rich fools in Nigeria to undergo trials, confiscate their stolen wealth, and sentence them to death. This is the only solution since the corrupt leaders cannot erode greed and corruption by themselves.

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