

Our God and our Father in heaven, we come into your presence this morning in the name of your son to lift up these tithes and offerings to thank you for the wherewithal to bring them into the treasuries of this church and pray for the blessing of them in your kingdom. As we turn to your word now, our God, we pray that you would speak to us with the voice that wakes the dead. Your word is living and active. It's sharper than any two-edged sword. It pierces to the division of soul and of spirit and of joints and of marrows and discerns the thoughts and the intentions of the heart. And we pray that you would come and search us and speak to us and draw us all to Christ, some for the first time, perhaps, and grow us all up in faith, for Jesus' sake, amen. Please take your seats, and if you would, turn with me this week in your copy of the word of God to Luke's gospel, chapter 12. We'll be back again in John's gospel next week, as the Lord spares. But this week we're in Luke 12, verse 13, and Christ has been speaking about law courts and the prospect of Christians being dragged before the law court and not worrying what to say when that happens. And there's a man in the crowd who's had his own legal issues. He's bent out of shape because his older brother has not shared the family fortune with him after his father died. All this talk of law courts just pokes the water balloon that bursts and he vents his frustration in the direction of Christ and gets a pretty stiff rebuke from the Savior. Let's pick up the reading in verse 13. This is God's word. Take heed how you hear. Someone in the crowd said to him, teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me. But Jesus 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 or greed, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions. 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, and be merry. But God said to him, fool, this night your soul will be required of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be? So was the one who lays up treasure for himself. and is not rich toward God. Amen. The grass withers and the flower falls off, but the word of God endures forever. Well, I'm told Bitcoin has become a fringe, but increasingly popular way of conducting one's transactions financially. And Bitcoin, of course, uses blockchain technology, which is about as far as my knowledge of bitchain goes. But it uses blockchain technology, which I'm told is very secure. It's private, and it protects your funds and your transactions, keeps them free from the prying, spying eyes of Big Brother. And also, because I'm told there are a limited amount of bitchain in the world, or the possibility of developing them, that it also can act as a hedge against inflation. It's been called digital gold. Now, there's a problem, of course. Now, before I go there, actually, let me say, I don't own any Bitcoin. I'm not advising any of you to own Bitcoin, though I wish it had gotten in when the price was really cheap 20 years ago. But the problem with Bitcoin is that you have to have a password. So all your money, all the transactions are stored on this hard drive, and you have to have a password to get in. And if you don't have the password or you lose the password, you are, to use a financially technical term, goosed. And this brings me to Stefan Thomas, who is an unfortunate chap who owns \$240 million of Bitcoin, but he has unfortunately forgotten his password. And he's used up, you've got 10 goes to guess the password. At the 10th go, the account is encrypted and it's gone forever. He's used up eight of his Go's, only got two left.

One of the Facebook security guys told him, I'll help you, but it'll cost you 10%. And he used Stephen Thomas, that hapless guy, as a bit of an illustration, because we're all a bit like that. Not that we have Bitcoin or limitless finances, but we're all looking for the secret code to unlock the rich life. We believe that the rich life, happiness, is there for the taking, and if we can just unlock the code, we can find it. And most of us tend to believe the rich life is a combination of the five Ps, prosperity, possessions, pleasure, popularity, and power. And if you can have those five Ps in the right balance and the right order, well, you can be happy, and you can be safe, and you can be secure forever. And Christ tells this parable to warn against that mindset. Here's this man, and there's a fortune, it seems, enough money to be bothered about anyway, that dad's left him. But his elder brother is the executor of the will, and the elder brother will actually give him his share. And it's really bothering this guy, and it's on his mind. And as Christ is teaching about a different type of judgment, this man can't get his mind off his own particular judgment in the court of law. And he says to Jesus, the Lord of heaven and earth, help me. Tell my brother, maybe he's here in the crowd, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me. And Jesus says, man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you? He's not denying that he's the judge of all the earth, but in this particular case, at this particular time, being a petty judge over petty disputes is not Christ's number one priority. He's got bigger fish to fry. But then Christ turns and he turns away from this man and he talks to the crowd. And he tells them this parable. He said to them, the crowd, take care and be on your guard against all greed or covetousness. Not some, but all. Why? For one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions. And to drive that point home, he teaches them this parable, the land of a rich man produced plentifully. And in this life, in this parable, sorry, we are introduced to this rich man who believes four lies about life and four lies about money, possessions. That sound remarkably plausible in my ears and in yours, and we're all by nature prone to believe them. And I want to walk through these four lies together as we look for the happy life, the rich life together, and where that happiness and where that wealth can be found. And the first lie is that life is about getting more. It's the he who dies with the most toys wins mentality. Which is actually wrong. He who dies with the most toys dies. But meanwhile, back at the ranch, and he told them a parable saying the land of a rich man produced plentifully, plentifully. Now, here's a man, and his fields, his investments have done far better than he could ever have hoped to expect. He's the guy who bought the pizza for 18 bitcoin 20 years ago, or received 18 coins for the pizza, and now has \$50 million, right? And it's wonderful. His business, his life has just exploded, and he's doing very well. And the question is, what's he going to do with all of that profit? And it's a natural dilemma. And what's interesting is, while Christ is teaching this parable to warn against greed and covetousness, this man at face value doesn't show any signs of greed or covetousness. He's just facing the reasonable and prudent oversight of an unusually large horde of stuff. It's a wonderful opportunity. But it's also, Jesus wants you to see this morning, such times of prosperity are also a temptation. Because whenever life goes well or not, the rise and fall of our fortunes present a potent temptation to get the meaning of life wrong. To believe the lie that I measure the wealth of my life by the size of my bank balances and by the amount of my possessions. And the man seems to have fallen into that trap. Later Christ says, so is he who is rich toward himself but not rich toward God. When you read this man's language, what's he say about God? Crickets. He never

mentions God once. It's all about me. Listen to his pronouns. His pronouns are me, mine, mine. My barns, my grain, my goods. And then God will say to him, or he'll say to also, he says to himself, my soul, verse 19. My barns, my grain, my good, my soul. It's all about me. and mine." Life's about me, that's what he's saying. And as we look at this point together, this first lie, life's about getting more, I want you to think, how do you measure the significance of your life? I mean, really think. Because at any particular time of any particular day, I can get the meaning of life wrong to you and think it's all about me. And there's a great verse to look at, it's in James 1, as we think particularly about wealth and its connection to our life. I want you to listen to this, James 1 verse 9. Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, and the rich in his humiliation. That's strange, you'd think he'd say, let the lowly brother boast in his humiliation, and the rich in his exaltation, but he gets it back to front, or so you'd think. Why? Because like a flower of the grass, he will pass away. For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass. Its flower falls and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits. Wow. So James here is clearly speaking about death, right? He's speaking about the moment a man dies. And he says the poor man, should boast in his exaltation at death." What's he mean? Well, he's leaving, the poor Christian is leaving the appearance of poverty and he's moving on to the reality of wealth. Now on earth, he is the son of God, but it has not yet appeared what he shall be. But when he dies, He's being exalted out of the appearance of poverty to enjoy the wealth that's always already been his. So James speaks of the poor man dying and being exalted. Now the rich man, this is also a rich Christian. The rich Christian should exalt in his humiliation. Because like a flower of the grass, he will pass away. So that makes, you gotta get your brain box on this morning. Hope you've had your caffeine. For how is the rich man, how is the rich Christian's death a humiliation, and why should he boast in it? Well, for the same reason as the poor Christian. Because the rich Christian, as he dies, it's a earthly humiliation. He's losing all of his earthly riches, but he boasts in it. Because like the poor Christian, he's moving into heaven to experience true riches. And so we can boast in the loss of all things, because he's not losing anything, he's gaining everything. Make sense? And so James is telling you, and Jesus is telling you, When you look at your wealth, the best way to measure it is not by what you can do with it on Monday morning, but by how it'll appear when you come to die. You measure a man's wealth not by the size of his wallet, but the condition of his soul before God, and whether his riches are here and there, or whether his riches are only here. That's the first lie, life's about getting more. Do you believe that? It's very easy to believe that. And no matter how much you have, you can always get more. You remember Rockefeller's famous question when he was asked, how much is enough? And Rockefeller said, oh, just a little bit more. Because yesterday's wealth is a day late. We want more tomorrow. First lie, life's about getting more. The second lie, life's about securing what you have, about building securities. Verse 18, back to Luke 12. What shall I do? For I have nowhere to store my crops. Verse 18, he says, I will do this. I'll tear down my barns and build larger ones. And there I will store all my grain and my goods. So again, this is natural. It's normal. It's prudent. He's got lots of grain. He can't leave the grain in the field on the street. It'll rot, go to ruin. That would be wasteful. So he makes the business decision. It's a good decision. Tear down the barns, build bigger barns, store it all there, and everything will be lovely. But it's clear that Christ is saying, this man is thinking, he's a little bit like a person who

buys life insurance to secure his family, his fortune, and his sanity, now, against the prospect of his death. Nobody wants to leave their family penniless. So you buy life insurance to insure against the reality of death. Wise. But what would you think of a man who bought life insurance but never thought about his soul after he dies? That would be foolish, wouldn't it? Because the Bible says it's appointed once for men to die and after that the judgment. And so you know you're going to die, so you buy life insurance because while you hope it's not today, you also hope it's not anytime soon. So you buy life insurance just in case you die before you want to. But you're going to die. What kind of a fool would buy life insurance but not think about eternity and what comes to him after his death? And that's that man, he's thinking that life is about getting more and then life's about securing what you own without also thinking of securing his soul. Is your soul secure in the arms of Jesus, the only place it can be secure? The only friend who will not let you down in your hour of need? Life's about getting more, lie number one. Lie number two, life's about securing what you have. Lie number three is life's about enjoying the simple pleasures. So he secured his wealth. Verse 19, and I will say to my soul, soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years. Relax, eat, drink, and be merry. Simple pleasures, food, drink, relaxation, pina colada on the beach, in the cabin, kicking back, just enjoying the breeze, that's life. Those are always our happiest moments, just relaxing, enjoying the good things of life. And of course the good things are God's gifts. And we use them in order. We worship the giver and we use the gifts. The problem is we human beings tend to put that back to front. We use the giver and worship his gifts. And for this man, his whole life has been about just enjoying the simple pleasures. Relax, eat, drink, and be merry. He leaves off the normal addendum, which is, for tomorrow you die. He doesn't like to think about that. But he does like relaxing, eating, drinking, and being Mary, life's about enjoying the simple pleasures. Is that you? Don't think about the future. Don't stress about the past. Just live in the present and seek to smell the roses and enjoy the simple pleasures. And there's much to be said for that mindset in a God-glorifying universe. We do enjoy God's gifts, and we enjoy him in the gifts as his gifts. But this too will pass. Which brings us to the fourth lie, and it's the most dangerous lie of all. Life's about getting more. Life's about securing what you have. Life's about enjoying the simple pleasures. The fourth lie is, life's about to go on for a very long time. I have much good laid up for many years. Plenty of time. But the man forgot that his times were not in his business might be in hand, but his times weren't in his hands. That there's a higher master in heaven who's appointed the first day we draw breath and the last day we draw breath. And that time cannot be abbreviated and it cannot be extended. In your book are written all of the days that were ordained for me before there was one of them," David says in the Psalms. Does not belong to man who lives to order his steps, but the Lord directs his path. There's a higher master. And this man had no idea that his last day was coming much faster than he ever could have expected. But God said to him, you fool, this night your soul will be required of you. And the things that you have prepared, whose will they be? So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God. And we all know that. Are we living that? We can be strange creatures of contradiction, can't we be? They discovered a lady at Pompeii, a frozen picture of contradiction. When Vesuvius erupted, she was running out of the city. And they found her with her feet pointing toward the gate. But her hand and her eyes were pointing in a different direction. They found her reaching back over her shoulder on the ground, her feet

pointing toward the gate, her hand pointing back to a small bag. And when they excavated that bag, Do you know what they found that contained? Pearls. Maybe they were her grandmother's handed down from generation to generation. Maybe she just saw them on the ground as she ran by. Somebody else had dropped them in the desperate struggle to get out of the city. But it shows in that moment while her feet were running out of the city, her hand was reaching back, frozen in the posture of contradiction and greed. We're all first Presbyterian church. We know it's appointed once for a man to die, after that the judgment. We know that there's coming a day when we will render an account to God for how we've spent our time, how we've spent our talents, how we've spent our treasure. And yet we forget about that constantly. We take our eyes off Christ and start looking at ourselves. Need a reminded of another time in Rockefeller's life. You remember, he's coming, he's dead, and they're about to read the will in the drawing room at the Rockefeller mansion. And as the barrister, the attorney, is walking down the paneled hallways toward the drawing room, this young lad who's there, part of the family, asks the question everybody wants to ask, but we're all embarrassed to ask, how much did the old man leave? And the lawyer looked at him with a glint in his eye and said, son, he left it all. Jesus told this parable to warn me and to warn you. Take care and be on your guard against all covetousness or greed, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions. I'll leave you with a quote. Gordon Gekko in the famous movie Wall Street makes this point. The point is, ladies and gentlemen, that greed, for lack of a better word, is good. Greed is right. Greed works. Greed clarifies. Greed cuts through and captures the essence of the evolutionary spirit. Greed in all of its forms, greed for life, for money, for love, knowledge, has marked the upward surge of mankind. And I would agree with Gordon Gekko. Greed works, for a moment. But it'll not work forever. It's the ultimate fair weather friend. It will forsake you when you need it most. In that most personal of all moments when you come to die. And you leave everything behind. Your friends, your family, your reputation, your money, your possessions. And you take that long, lonely walk down the valley of the shadow of death. and you'll not want greed as your companion on that day, or your possessions. I've got a better friend for you this morning, the Lord Jesus Christ, who's a friend who sticks closer than a brother, who came into this world to give you life that you might have life and have it in abundance. He would take all of your sin as his own and perish under your sin as a sinner in the wrath of God upon the cross, because he loved you, He gave his life for you. He was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might become rich, rich toward God now and rich toward God forever. He's saying, lift up your eyes. It's not that the prizes, the baubles of this world aren't good and beautiful and true. They're just not forever. And the only good, you know, the baubles on the Christmas tree only look good if you compare them with other Christmas trees. But they're not really worth anything. But solid joys and lasting treasures, none but Zion's children know. And this stewardship season, it's not about giving, not about serving, not about doing. It's about knowing Jesus and coming to Him and having Him reset the thermostat of our souls, reorder the thoughts of our minds, and to peel back the layers of our corneas and our souls that we could see things properly and measure things accurately by the light of eternity and by the light of God and not by the light of a man's MasterCard or Visa and how much he can buy. Be on your guard against greed and all covetousness, for even when a man has an abundance, his life does not consist in what he possesses. So is everyone who is rich toward themselves and is

not rich toward God. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your word, its power, its ability to shed light on our hearts and to show us how all of us even the preacher, pastors, elders of this church. We get things wrong on a colossal level. We so easily believe these lies. Life's about getting more. Life's about building security here and now. Life's about enjoying the simple pleasures. And life's about to go on for a very long time. And yet we know not what a day will bring to pass. Help us to live our lives and measure wealth in light of eternity, oh God. In Jesus' name, amen.