

“Waiting in Central Casting”
Luke 12:13-34; Colossians 3:1-6

Read Luke 12:13-34.

Introduction

This is a drama about greed. It has four characters in it. As we go along, you can decide which role you would like to play. If you get really engaged in the story, you have my permission to play more than one role.

Move 1

The first role is a character named “someone”; he comes with his brother that we may identify as “someone’s brother.” This is a small role, and you can get this part over with quickly. It is nevertheless an important role, because everything in the story depends on it.

¹³ *“Someone in the crowd said to Jesus.”* (Luke 12:13)

It’s an anonymous voice in the crowd, not one of the disciples. It is a voice in the world, not of the church. He said,

¹³ *...“Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”* (Luke 12:13)

That’s what you get if you have a brother. The brother is likely the older brother who was named the executor; he is shifty and cunning, so that the first brother thinks he’s not being treated fairly. And likely he’s not. Maybe the speaking brother is desperate for some inherited money.

The text may suggest that he already had a lot, but he wants more. He will never have enough and it sets him against his brother. He wants what his brother has, his or not, and there is a kind of scolding, grasping anxiety in his voice, suggesting that it is never enough.

If you want to play this role, you have to practice a tone of grasping, scolding anxiety.

Move 2

The second role is a rich man. He has a name but we'll come to that later. I think he is made to look, in the parable, a lot like the brother in the crowd. But he is different. He is a posterous can-do guy who is always thinking and planning and buying and selling and trading and getting. You know the type!

He talks a lot. But he lives alone. He inhabits a world that has no other residents. He is a lonely rich man.

Perhaps he is lonely because he has so much land he is a far piece from the nearest neighbor.

He talks a lot, but he is required to talk only to himself, as his abundance has eliminated everyone else from his conversation.

We see him in two postures. First, we see him *planning*;

¹⁷... *'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.'* (Luke 12:17)

[Pause.] Answer:

¹⁸ "...*I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.*" (Luke 12:18)

And after he plans, he pauses to *celebrate*. He holds a party. Probably drinks and music and dancing, but nobody comes. Small party. Now, finally he speaks his own name.

"Soul, psyche, self, anonymous, unconnected, isolated guy with abundance."

So the drinking started and the eating and making merry. All by himself.

You can imagine, he is safe, perhaps drunk by now, alone, content, vulnerable, alone, safe, alone, rich, alone, asleep, alone. It is not a happy role to play.

But some play it anyway in their muchness.

Move 3

There is a third role. It is God. Would you like to play God? You can, but I don't think anyone should have that role all by one's self.

So I suggest we share this role and all of us think about playing it. It is a rather heavy role for a party-crasher.

²⁰“*But God said...*” (Luke 12:20)

How did God get in here to the party?

This man was all alone, but God violates the solitude, enters the party, and addresses the guy, the one whose name is *self*.

God calls the man by a different name, not self. He calls him by his right name. God is the one who knows the names of all the players.

Your name is not self, it's ²⁰ ‘...*fool*’ (Luke 12:20)

You act your name, fool that you are, so greedy that you have isolated yourself, so acquisitive that you have lost your soul, your self. You have been so covetous that you have organized your life against your own personhood.

We can all play this role with this word. Say it with me, “Fool!”

Being God is demanding, because you must sometime speak the unwelcome truth when everyone else is engaged in deception. *The truth is you are going to die.*

You not only have to tell the truth, you have to have an eloquent phrase for your verdict. You are going to die because you are not ²¹ “*rich toward God*” (Luke 12:21).

You are rich for yourself, but rich for yourself is misdirected wealth that kills, because your true character is to turn your wealth back to God and God's will for the world.

God quotes the book of Proverbs:

Foolishness brings death; you cannot spend enough money or own enough land to break the connection between foolishness and death. That is the verdict of the story.

Move 4

If you are lucky, you will be in the fourth role, the disciples. The disciples are the ones who have watched this drama from behind the one-way mirror in the classroom. And now the teacher comes to ask the observers: What do you think this is about?

He said: “Do not be anxious; do not be a fool; do not choose death.”

He said: “Your Father will get you what you need without your greediness.”

He said: “Get to work for the kingdom, and the rest will take care of itself.”

He said: “Do not be afraid, and if not afraid, not greedy, not coveting, no acquisitive.

He said: “Live lean and rejoice.”

The disciples are lucky because they are invited to an alternative.

The disciples are the ones invited and empowered by Jesus for a different way in the world,

- outside the aggression, outside the fear, outside the death trap,
- invited to be rich toward God,
- having put the treasure where it belongs,
- not called fool, called little flock, little beloved flock, invited differently, not to death.

Move 5

Perhaps you noticed I did not mentioned Jesus yet.

Well, he is the director of central casting. He decides who belongs appropriately in what role.

So consider the options, because the assignment of parts will be made soon:

- The someone with a brother, with grasping, scolding anxiety.
- The rich man, all alone at his party, with a death sentence for greed.
- God, who call things by their right names and breaks the deception.
- The disciples, the ones authorized to do differently.

Central casting will act soon.

You may want to practice for your preferred role, because nobody is assigned a role that is unsuitable.

This text is being played out just below the surface in our daily lives. It is a sub-version of reality.

Oh, here comes central casting with the assignments...Are you ready?

Colossians 3:1-6 – Rules for Holy Living

¹Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. ³For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. ⁵Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. ⁶Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.

Invitation

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Luke 12:13-34 – The Parable of the Rich Fool

¹³Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”

¹⁴Jesus replied, “Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?”

¹⁵Then 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.”

¹⁶And he told them this parable: “The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. ¹⁷He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’

¹⁸“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. ¹⁹And I’ll say to myself, ‘You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.’”

²⁰“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?’

²¹“This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God.” ²²Then Jesus said to his disciples: “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear.

²³Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. ²⁴Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds!

²⁵Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? ²⁶Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?

²⁷“Consider how the lilies grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ²⁸If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! ²⁹And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. ³⁰For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. ³¹But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.

³²“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. ³³Sell 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. ³⁴For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.