

Sermon

God Can...

Pastor Lisa Giacomazza
Bacon Memorial Presbyterian Church
August 3, 2025

Today we meet Jesus teaching among the crowd. Maybe it was something like this. Outdoors, people interested in what Jesus had to say. But within our human condition, we have many obstacles that prevent us from truly hearing and comprehending the words. We come with our own agendas, our own preconceived notions of what we want to hear. We have been taught by humans throughout our lives of what is just, what is fair, what is right. And that drives us to our core. When we feel we have been unjustly treated, we want that to be rectified. We typically begin by rallying our cry to others so we gain needed support and justification that we are indeed right for what we desire. And in that very process, we may begin to lose ourselves a little. Let me show you what I mean – rather let's see how Jesus handles it.

A man in the crowd, we are told, shouts to Jesus ““Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.” But Jesus, very wise, responds, “Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?” But rather than support this man’s request and perhaps give

him the inheritance share that he feels he deserves, Jesus cautions, “Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.” Or, perhaps, at least it shouldn’t.

As we look around our homes, I am certain you will see an overabundance of possessions. Things we have saved as memorabilia, trinkets and treasures, things that might hold some usefulness someday. Some people come to this place in a sense of fear and anxiety and hoard possessions to fill voids that they have due to a tragedy or trauma they have experienced. Either way, Jesus is giving us a very clear message here. Best we truly listen – not with the agenda we came with, but with a clear openness to hear what only our spirit understands. So take a moment here and pause...let’s push out any fear, anxiety, concern we came with...and here this teaching from Jesus...

“The land of a rich man produced abundantly. 17 And he thought to himself, ‘What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?’ 18 Then he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years;

relax, eat, drink, be merry.’ 20 But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ 21 So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God.”

Jesus provides this as a warning – not just of greed, but of how the weight of holding on to things that no longer serve us can lead to suffering. Not just for ourselves but for those who might benefit from what we had but no longer need.

Society tells us it is prudent and correct to save and prepare. We are told to start contributing to a 401(K) retirement fund when we start working, 40 years before we might even be able to access it. We are giving up funds now in the hopes that our retirement years will be filled with excellent health, lots of time and access to travel and whatever else our hearts desire. When you consider this, it’s quite a gamble. Perhaps prudent on some levels, but is life only to be truly lived when we retire? Oddly, the average person spends about 7 years in retirement...just 7. But based on our American process, it doesn’t seem wrong that this man would seek to establish a plan for a future when he could relax. We are not told he gains his wealth by unjust means. We are not told anything negative about him at all until God appears and declares him a fool.

There's a quiet force in this parable—a silence that speaks volumes. Notice, Jesus doesn't condemn the man for *how* he earned his wealth. The issue isn't his success; it's his assumption. He believed his possessions could secure his future, satisfy his soul, and shield him from need. He trusted in his barns, not in his Creator. That's what made him a fool—not his prosperity, but his misplaced faith.

And when Jesus calls out this miscalculation, it's jarring. It unsettles us. But that's the point. This parable is meant to disorient us—not to shame us, but to awaken us. Because in that moment of spiritual vertigo, Jesus invites us to reorient our hearts toward a deeper truth: that life does not consist in the abundance of things, but in the abundance of grace, in the richness of relationship with God, and in the eternal security of the Kingdom.

So where do I find you today?

Is there something weighing on your heart—someone you're concerned about, a situation that's left you uncertain? Maybe you're standing at the edge of a life-changing moment, one you didn't plan for. Even if it brings joy, it can still feel unsettling. Because let's be honest—our human nature craves predictability. We like things to stay the same, to feel secure.

That's often why we prepare and save for the future. It gives us—however falsely—a sense of control, a belief that we know what's coming next. And let me be clear: I'm not saying you shouldn't prepare. I don't believe the Lord is saying that either. But there is a gentle caution here. When we begin to believe that we *alone* can fix what's broken, solve every problem, and push forward by sheer willpower, we risk making the journey far harder than it needs to be.

Practical preparation has its place. But it's only a small part of the process. The much greater, more essential part is spiritual: learning to trust in God's will for our lives. Believing—deeply and consistently—that God wants the very best for us. That God loves us more than we could ever comprehend. That God sees far beyond what our limited human minds can grasp.

And yes, trusting in that can feel terrifying. But remember this: when we see no way forward, God *makes* a way. When the path disappears, God *creates* one. God shakes the earth—Amen! God stirs the waters—Hallelujah! And in that holy movement, we find hope, healing, and the strength to walk forward—not alone, but with the One who goes before us.

And God knows better than me, this Pastor. God knew I needed to reflect on our scripture from Acts. We talked about this passage a few months ago, and here it is again. A happy accident that it was included today. This is not the lectionary reading...this one was God's choice for us today...it could just be me but come along.

There are moments in life when we feel trapped—by circumstances, by fear, by grief, or by uncertainty. Like Paul and Silas, we may find ourselves in a kind of prison, literal or emotional, with no clear way forward. But Acts 16 reminds us that *God's power is not limited by walls, chains, or human impossibility.*

Paul and Silas were beaten, bound, and thrown into the deepest part of the prison. Yet in their pain, they chose to worship. They sang hymns in the dark. And in that darkness, God moved. The earth shook. The prison doors flew open. Chains fell off. Not just theirs—but everyone's.

That's the power of God. That's the power of our faith. When we think there's no way forward, God doesn't just open a door—He shakes the very foundation of what holds us captive. He liberates us in ways we never imagined. And sometimes, the miracle isn't just for

us. The jailer, who thought all was lost, found salvation that night. His whole household was transformed.

So if you're feeling stuck, if the night feels long and the walls are closing in, remember: God is still in the business of breaking chains. He is still shaking foundations. He is still making a way where there is no way. Keep singing. Keep trusting. The breakthrough may be closer than you think. Because God can...when there's no way – God can. When it seems lost, God can. When you have no strength left, God can.

Amen