



# **The Rich Fool**

**Luke 12:15-21**

**Ranger Reggie had offered a special prize to whichever team won the Camp Venture Bible Challenge. It was a day at their favorite swimming hole! The campers were excited as the camp van pulled up to the banks of Venture River. They all piled out at once and ran for the water!**

**"Wow, this is awesome," Lewis exclaimed as he dove in.**

**Ranger Reggie grinned as he watched the happy campers play. He reached into his pack and pulled out four masks and snorkels. "The best part of this river is under the water. Put these on and dive so you can see the fish and water plants."**

**Moments later they were diving and exploring. Billy popped up his head and shouted, "You've gotta see these fish! They're really cool!"**

**"It's so pretty under here!" Natalie exclaimed as she came up to the surface.**

**"Hey, look under here!" Lewis called out several minutes later from his spot in the river. "Something is sparkling under the water."**

**"It's hundreds of coins!" squealed Amanda as she came up for air with the rest of the campers. She raised her hand above the water to look at the silver and gold coins she had retrieved from the river bottom.**

**All four campers yelled and splashed as they breathlessly gathered dozens of the coins and piled them up on the shore. After studying the coins closely, Ranger Reggie explained that the coins were probably from a famous shipwreck that happened on the river more than 200 years earlier. "Look," he said as he pointed to one coin. "You can just barely see the date '1808.' These are probably very valuable coins. And, because no one owns this land, you can keep the coins you collect."**

**After an hour of searching for and admiring the coins, Ranger Reggie called the campers to shore to eat their lunch of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.**

**"I can't believe we found all those coins!" Lewis exclaimed. "I wonder how much they are worth?"**

**"Yeah," Billy agreed. "I bet they are worth a lot! Maybe can sell the coins and split the money."**

**Natalie nodded as she threw a huge piece of bread to a nearby seagull. "Should we share our coins with the campers back at camp?"**

**"No!" Billy said what the other campers were thinking. "Let's keep them. If we share the coins, then we will have less for ourselves."**

**"Look at that seagull," Lewis said as he pointed toward the bird that had taken the bread from Natalie. The gull ate some of the bread and was burying the rest of it. Other hungry-looking seagulls were gathered nearby squawking at him.**

**"Wow, I had no idea seagulls were so selfish," Billy said after watching the scene for a few moments.**

**"Selfish! That's putting it nicely! Most seagulls are downright greedy!" Natalie explained. "In fact, seagulls are so greedy that they could have a nice piece of food in their mouth and they'll fight over another piece."**

**Lewis shook his head in confusion. "But aren't they afraid they'll drop the first piece?"**

**"They usually do and then they end up with nothing," Ranger Reggie said. "That's how it is with greediness. Those who want everything often end up with nothing." He pulled his Bible from his pack. "That reminds me of a Bible parable about a rich fool." He turned to Luke 12 and read, "The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. 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.'"**

**"That sounds like a smart idea," Natalie interrupted. "I wonder why the Bible called him a rich fool?"**

**"The next verses tell the answer," Ranger Reggie explained. Then he continued to read, "I'll say to myself, 'You have plenty of good things 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 anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God."**

**Reggie looked up from his Bible. "Do you see, campers? The man was called a fool because he was storing up things that wouldn't last forever. If we don't use our riches to be rich toward God, then all we have is a trunk full of junk!"**

**"Oh, I get it! Jesus was sending us a great big warning," Lewis realized. "Do not be greedy, like a seagull."**

**"Very good!" Ranger Reggie agreed. "Listen to what Jesus said to His followers: 'Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.'" He looked up and asked, "Did you hear that? Having lots of stuff is not the most important thing. Our greatest treasure is Jesus. Is it okay to have lots of things? Of course, it is. But, we must use those things to build God's kingdom instead of keeping them for ourselves. That's what it means to be rich towards God."**

**Billy looked down at the coins scattered on their beach blankets. "I guess keeping all of these coins to ourselves is selfish," he said softly.**

**"I think we should sell the coins and use the money to pay for scholarships for campers who can't afford to pay for camp," Lewis suggested.**

**"Or, we could use the money to make the camp a better place for everyone," Natalie offered.**

**Ranger Reggie smiled as he listened to the campers. "Those are great ideas! Using the money for the good of others will make you rich in God's eyes." Ranger Reggie stood up and folded his chair. "Gather up your coins. We can take them to the coin collector in town tomorrow and see how much they are worth."**

**As the campers repacked their beach gear, Billy said, "You know, I've got two whole boxes of chocolate chip cookies hidden under my bunk. I'd like to share them with the other guys in my cabin."**

**"Great idea, Billy!" Ranger Reggie said and gave Billy a high-five.**

**"And, I'm going to let the other kids help me use my science kit that I have been hiding in my trunk to learn more about the world God created," Natalie added.**

**"I've been saving all of my allowance to use on video games. I don't need that many games. I'm going to give some of my savings to the homeless shelter near my church," Lewis decided.**

**Amanda had stood quietly as the other campers offered to share some of their special riches with others. She wanted to join in the fun of giving, but didn't know what to give. Finally, she smiled and yelled out, "I've got it! I worked for hours and hours making my parable wind chimes perfect. I've been hiding it from the younger campers who wanted to play with it. But, I'm going to share it with them while I help them learn the parables!"**

**Ranger Reggie gave Amanda a double high-five and Natalie rushed to give her a big hug. "You are all getting the idea! I'm so glad you want to share your riches with others instead of keeping them to yourselves. Now you are rich toward God!"**

**Ranger Reggie smiled at each camper and then waved for them to follow him back to the camp van. "Let's get going so we can start sharing!"**