

The Rich Fool (2 Kings 20:12–21; Luke 12:16–21) 18.10.2026

- 1.** King Hezekiah of Judah fell ill. When Merodach-Baladan heard about it, he sent envoys to visit him. Merodach-Baladan was the king of ancient Babylon. To put it in modern terms, it was as though Iraq had sent a delegation to Israel to inquire after its king's health. But this happened just after Judah had successfully resisted an invasion by the Assyrian Empire.
- 2.** King Hezekiah showed the envoys from Babylon a great many things. We can group them into four categories: first, the gold and silver in his treasury; second, his spices and precious oil; third, all the weapons in his armoury; and fourth, everything in his storehouses. In other words, he showed them everything he possessed.
- 3.** Scholars differ in their opinions as to why the king of Judah revealed all these things to the Babylonian envoys. Ultimately, however, many speculate that he was seeking an alliance with Babylon. After all, Judah and Babylon faced a common and formidable threat in Assyria. It would be rather like Saudi Arabia and Pakistan forming an alliance because of the threat posed by Iran.
- 4.** In a YouTube video, an elderly man took a Rolex watch worth €15,000 off his wrist and threw it into a lake. As he did so, he declared, "Rich people don't wear Rolexes!" His point was that wealth is not something to show off. He emphasised that the true nature of wealth lies in what remains hidden. So, if someone feels the need to flaunt their wealth, that person is already "broken!"
- 5.** The same was true of Hezekiah. Some might call what he did a diplomatic manoeuvre in international politics. But displaying all the nation's wealth, luxury goods, military strength, and valuables could hardly prove that he possessed the wealth and standing necessary to form an alliance. Rather, to us looking back on this event today, it reveals his poverty, his wretchedness, and his foolishness.
- 6.** Before this incident, Judah had been invaded by Assyria. But when Hezekiah prayed, 185,000 Assyrian soldiers were struck down in a single night. The angel of the LORD went out and struck them down. King Sennacherib of Assyria, having suffered such a devastating blow, returned to his home city of Nineveh, where he faced a coup.
- 7.** Yet it was in the midst of all this that Judah began preparing for an alliance with Babylon, even to the point of laying bare everything it possessed. What does this suggest to us today? The king of God's kingdom was engaging in worldly politics. A man who had experienced the angel of the LORD was beginning to turn his attention to his own wealth.

8. When visitors come to our church, we usually sit down for a chat in the pastor's study. These days, there is something I hear from virtually every one of them: "Your church has really grown!" Those who remember KRCN from years ago say it with even greater conviction: "God's grace has truly been abundant!"

9. A politically minded pastor would probably feel rather proud upon hearing such words. "That's right. All this has happened since I became the pastor here." Even if that were what he was thinking inwardly, he would probably respond outwardly, "Indeed, it is all by God's grace."

10. Without even being asked, such a politically minded pastor would go on and on about all sorts of things: how many families had joined the church each year, how much its finances had grown, how the church building had been purchased, and what plans lay ahead. He would roll up his sleeves and show off the many Rolex watches dangling from his wrist. How foolish!

11. Everyone, try asking one of the AI tools that are so popular these days to analyse King Hezekiah's actions in 2 Kings 20. Even AI will tell you that this was a fatal lapse in spiritual vigilance, a grave mistake in which he relied on worldly wealth and power instead of God. And it will remind you, "Remember the old man with the Rolex!"

12. As long as there is a desire to boast within us, our revival is not true revival. If we have a desire to show off what we possess or what we have achieved, we are nothing more than broken rich people. And if we are doing so to form alliances with others, or to draw someone into our league, then we must look at Hezekiah. We must return to the word of God spoken to him.

13. Now, returning to Scripture, look at v. 15. The prophet Isaiah came to Hezekiah and asked him, in effect, "What on earth have you done?" Hezekiah replied quite nonchalantly, "I showed them everything!" In his mind, it was a sophisticated diplomatic gesture intended to overcome a national crisis. And under that pretext, he had indulged in boasting to his heart's content.

14. The LORD's judgment upon Hezekiah, king of Judah, consisted of two parts. First, in v. 17, Judah would be destroyed by the very Babylon on which he was relying. Second, in v. 18, some of Hezekiah's descendants would become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon. These two declarations together constituted God's final verdict.

15. Although expressed in two parts, this judgment was, in fact, a declaration of Judah's eventual end, which would come about a little over a hundred years later through the invasion of Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Neo-Babylonian Empire. Judah would spend seventy years in captivity under the very people with whom Hezekiah had sought to form an alliance. And during that captivity, Daniel would appear and become a eunuch in the royal courts of Babylon and Persia.

16. What draws our attention in this account is Hezekiah's response to God's judgment. It is the attitude of the very person upon whom the sentence has been pronounced. If we call that judgment God's covenant, then the response of the one who stands as a party to that covenant is recorded in v. 19.

17. Verse 19: "Hezekiah said to Isaiah, 'The word of the LORD which you have spoken is good.' For he said, 'Will it not be good, if peace and truth are in my days?'" (2 Kings 20:19, NKJV)

18. What was Hezekiah's response to this covenant, or sentence? First, he declared that the God who pronounced such a judgment was good. Second, he said, "Will it not be good?" If we bring these two statements together, they amount to a declaration that he would submit and obey the word spoken through the prophet Isaiah—that is, God's judgment of the Babylonian captivity.

19. The problem, however, lies in the attitude with which he speaks of such obedience. It is the condition inserted between his two declarations: "If peace and truth are in my days..." In other words, as long as that much was guaranteed, he did not care what happened afterward. To attach a condition to God's word in this way reveals that the obedience he professes is not wholehearted.

20. There were still more than a hundred years to go before King Nebuchadnezzar would arrive. The destruction of his kingdom, and the loss of all the wealth and power he had so proudly displayed, were still a long way off. This meant that Hezekiah would die without ever witnessing that judgment. In other words, he was simply turning a blind eye to it. As long as it did not happen in his own lifetime, he was content to let his nation be destroyed and its people taken into captivity.

21. This was the attitude of Hezekiah, the king of Judah, who was supposed to rule over God's kingdom. If the king himself was like this, how much worse must the rest of the people have been? Who could be more wicked than this? Who could be more foolish? Hezekiah was just like the foolish rich man whom Jesus spoke of in the Gospel of Luke.

22. First, the rich man's fields produced such an abundant harvest that he had more grain than he could store. So he came up with a plan to build bigger barns to hold it all. Just as Hezekiah had prepared for another Assyrian invasion, this man made preparations for the future. Then he said to himself, "You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry" (Luke 12:19, NIV).

23. Jesus called him a fool. Outwardly, he appeared to be a wealthy man. He was not lazy but had worked diligently. And Hezekiah, for his part, was a wise king who had even handled international politics skilfully. Yet Jesus described such a man as one who was not rich toward God. He had given himself over to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

24. Hezekiah's vision could not reach beyond this present life. He had no hope for a new life before God that would endure eternally beyond death. The furthest his Rolex-wearing hand could reach was, at most, a hundred years into the future. And so, although Hezekiah was rich, it would be harder for him to enter the kingdom of heaven than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle.

25. Let me read you a passage from Luke: "You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?" And Jesus continued, "This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:20–21, NIV).

26. Everyone, I want you to remember that this is the story of Hezekiah. Hezekiah was the king of Judah, and Judah represents the kingdom of God. Hezekiah himself, then, was the king of that kingdom and a royal priest. He represents the believers who belong to the church today.

27. In other words, this biblical account portrays how even those who have been saved, while living in the kingdom of God, may still fail to be rich toward God. That is precisely what we see in Hezekiah. What, then, does Jesus mean by being rich toward God?

28. It means that we do not rely on the wealth of this world or on any political power, but depend on God alone. What we need to prepare is not larger barns or an abundance of possessions to fill them. Rather, we must place our trust more fully in God, who may demand our lives from us this very night. In this way, we are to have no other god besides Him.

29. As king of Judah, this is how Hezekiah ought to have lived. This is what it truly means to be rich: to have experienced the angel of the LORD, to have been granted an extension of life, and to have witnessed God move the shadow on the stairway of Ahaz back ten steps as a sign of His promise. Such was the life and standing of a man who was truly rich. Yet Hezekiah's decision to turn to politics revealed just how foolish a rich man he was.