

Jesus' Sermon on Riches,
including the Parable of the Rich Fool

In some of his stories, Leo Tolstoy included Scripture references, suggesting that his moral stories were inspired by certain Biblical passages. Although there is no Scripture verse mentioned in his work 'The Death of Ivan Ilyich,' the novella is a moral story based on scriptural principles. Leo Tolstoy was not an orthodox Christian; however, he took the teachings of Christ seriously and preached the principles as he understood them in his literature.¹

Luke 12:15 – 34²

And he said unto them, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses.

And he spake a parable unto them, saying, "The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?' And he said, 'This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.'

But God said unto him, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?"

So is he that lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

And he said unto his disciples, "Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment.

"Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them: how much more are ye better than the fowls?"

"And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest?"

"Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith?"

"And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and

¹ your teacher's note

² quoted from the King James or Authorized Version (1611). Spelling has been modernized.

your Father knows that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.

“Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that fails not, where no thief approaches, neither moth corrupts.

“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”