

Luke 12:13-21

In Hosea, our OT reading this morning, we see God's people turn from him towards worshiping false idols. Fortunately for Israel, He calls them from their slavery. Slavery here is a relative term, meaning anything at all that keeps us from having a relationship with God...think about all the things we can become slaves to that damage our relationship with others.

Slavery to money, to work, to a dysfunctional relationship, addictions to drugs, alcohol, sex, shopping...and even your phone...all of these things isolate us from one another and then ultimately from God.

Then in our Psalm this morning, the Psalmist thanks the Lord for his steadfast love – “for the Lord fills the hungry with good things and satisfies the thirsty.” Note that there is no mention of food or drink here; this is a hunger for something more, a thirst to find joy, love, and peace in our lives...to fill a deeper need.

Unfortunately, many of us look to worldly things to fill this void...a void that each one of us carries inside us... and we have a tendency to seek worldly things to satisfy that deeper hunger.

Paul tells the early Church to set their minds on things above, not on things of the earth. To die to earthly things, the anchors which tie us to the false gods of our lives. He tells us to rise to a new life in Christ...and to new possibilities... and with it – come to experience true freedom...Freedom from our earthly circumstances.

So tell me... does the more stuff we have make our lives free and easier? Sure, in many ways they certainly do. But have all these modern amenities and appliances and computers now freed us up so that we now have more free time for ourselves, for each other, and for God? MMMMM...

How are we using our stuff? Or are we actually being used by our stuff? Are we the master or the slave?

Now let's turn to our Gospel reading today, the parable of the rich fool, a man who is more concerned about storing his excess stuff rather than focusing his sites on the bigger picture - an eternal storehouse and the treasures that awaits...

The parable of the rich fool challenges the status quo and the establishment; it is a potent reminder of the folly of living for our stuff here in the kingdom of man.

Now the man in the parable is a landowner for whom everything has gone right...He is faced with the happy problem of what to do with all his surplus... the man never considers sharing his good fortune with others in his community.

He thinks only of himself.

His solution then is of course to just build a bigger house for his stuff (sounds like that George Carlin Routine) ...so now he can kick back and enjoy himself for years to come. Sounds a lot like the American dream! This man's mistake is that he thought only of himself.

He lost everything because he invested in the world rather than in the kingdom of God. In heavenly terms, this is short term planning with no long-term vision!

Short term profits, with no long-term health and stability. This is like first century corporate thinking...and he didn't have the proper death insurance which would lead to life everlasting! It's no different today is it?! Sounds very much like modern corporate America.

The illusion Christ exposes is the tendency we have to rely on earthly things to give us a false sense of self and security. Living for kingdom values is the exact opposite of living for me, myself and my own!

Like we said last week rather than focusing on a life filled with fear, scarcity and social acceptance, Jesus is inviting us into a different way of looking at things...a way of life that will satisfy that hunger and thirst which the world can never satisfy.

Jesus' parable challenges our myopic, consumeristic view of the world and demands quite a different set of lenses, one that focuses squarely on God and our neighbor.

The Gospel reading paints a vivid image of the dangers of wealth for wealth's own sake. Those who have been abundantly blessed risk the sin of greed. Enough is never enough, more is only to be hoarded, and "Me, Myself and I" matter more than anyone else. Focusing only on oneself keeps us from being rich towards God and rich towards others...and by the way those without a lot of stuff also risk the sin of Envy for someone else's stuff. See it's all us serving stuff rather than the stuff we are blessed with serving all of us together...Stuff gives us a false sense of self.

Satan and the Ego are often one in the same! Who needs to depend on God when we can just depend on our self...who needs a savior when we can just save ourselves? He who has the most toys in the end wins! George Straight said in one of his songs the Hearst doesn't have a luggage rack.

Now please don't confuse this with being good stewards of resources and planning for future generations. Appropriate concern for the future is balanced with the command to share your abundance and to care for one's neighbor...to provide for the poor and marginalized. And like we have been saying...Where is your focus and desires...where is your heart?

In this parable... "I," "me," and "my" dominate the story...listen for the pronouns.

The man is so self-centered that he cannot see beyond what he considers to be "his" barns, and "his" own life, rather than seeing them all as gifts he has been given by God to be appreciated and to be shared in gratitude.

Look around today - The constant message of today's media boils down to one thing: Stuff in EXCESS. We are encouraged to spend more, have more and use more... supersize and maximize...get the latest and greatest stuff!

Our consume and consume more culture cultivates a propensity to buy things that we don't even need and fosters a lifestyle which always leaves us feeling empty and hungry for more...it's like a twinkie it's not real...it's empty calories and will never fill us!

...and not only look at WHAT we want... but WHY we even want it at all. FOMO Fear of missing out! And do we ever have enough...do we have a scarcity mentality, or are we abundantly blessed...a mentality of having just enough and being content with our lives... do we trust in a God who always gives us just what we need...not everything we may want!?

Will we measure our lives by the standards of the media, seducing us to want more and more, or by the call of Jesus to be rich towards Others and God? Using our blessings then to share and connect with others. When all is said and done, Jesus invites us into a place of trusting something more durable than our Global economy...The eternal economy of God's grace towards All of God's creation.

There is a lot of madness in what we call our earthly life here in America. Consumerism ties our possessions to our sense of self-worth and when we let ourselves become defined by our stuff then we in effect become slaves to them...

The guy in the parable has it all and probably has quite a lot of stuff...We would most likely call him very successful! What most of us Americans spend most of our time and effort and resources striving for with our one precious life.

But be warned - man and his successes are not the currency of heaven! Our earthly ego, pride, possessions, and wealth are just temporary illusions. Money in all reality is nothing more than just a piece of paper...it only has worth because WE say so...it's not real...it's an arbitrary symbol of our worth...

This kind of focus can easily separate us from God, each other, and our true self. Our stuff, or rather our attachment to it, keeps us from being free and experiencing the gifts that God has granted to all God's children.

The more stuff we have in our lives; the more effort is then required to keep and maintain it...(just take a look in my basement)... Our life quickly gets wrapped up in worldly aspirations, leaving little room for the freedom to truly live our lives as God intended.

Now our earthly possessions may SEEM to give us “self-worth” and “self-reliance”.... and at best they can create fleeting happiness... But notice how all our stuff never ever satisfies us...the stuff can never satisfy that hunger which we all have for something more...

They never create joy, peace, or love in our lives...this is the true currency and worth of our lives... not tied to changing circumstances but tied to the timeless treasures which are free gifts from our creator to all of us.

In this parable, Jesus is once again saying it's not all about me... in order to serve God and one another we must give up the vanity of clinging to our ego. Our worth is not tied to all the labels we have acquired over this brief lifetime. And once we are stripped of worldly labels and possessions who are we really?

Look around today -- how do we gauge the measure of a successful person? Looks great, has a good job, great house, fancy car, the latest gadgets, has the most letters next to their name. We are constantly told that the measure of our worth is based upon what we own. We let our stuff define who we are.

Now don't get me wrong ...It's not that wealth and possessions are good or bad in themselves...believe me I have a lot of stuff myself...The key here rather is what importance do we give to our stuff and then what we do with that stuff... that is what matters most.

Are we using our stuff and our gifts to serve the good of creation, or is it about only being self-serving...again I ask you where is your heart?

That's why Jesus tells his disciples the more you have here; the harder it will be to experience God.

To what are YOU attached? Where is YOUR focus? Look at what you treasure and focus on... that is the true measure of where your heart is...and who you are!

Jesus tells us that where our treasure is, there our heart lies! What do you spend your time and money on...that's the true measure of what you hold most dear...and do your possessions connect you... or disconnect you from one another?!

The bottom line is that Jesus is looking for a focus and movement from a reliance on ourselves and our own virtues, to a reliance on God and kingdom virtues. A movement towards defining ourselves by our relationships rather than by the stuff we own! For in the end... that's really all that ever matters! Relationships and Connections are what we hold most dear!

So may you put your "stuff" in perspective, the stuff that weighs you down, so that you are truly free... free of the confines of your earthly bonds so that you may get a glimpse of the eternal life that was gifted to you by God.

And may you treasure your relationships...your relationships with God and with others so that you may come to realize and experience the true currency of heaven – joy, love and peace... available to all of you right now today... even as you store up for yourself treasures in heaven!

AMEN!

Your faithful servant,

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