

November 12, 2017

St. Luke 12:22-34:

***“Where Your Treasure Is,
There Your Heart Will Be Also”***

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In order to understand our Gospel lesson for this morning it helps to reflect upon the verses which proceed it. In Luke 12:16-21 we have the Parable of the Rich Fool:

And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man produced plentifully, and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry." But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."

In this parable, we can see what greed can do to us. To begin with, God had given this man more than what he needed for life. Yet, he did not recognize that God was the giver of everything, nor was he concerned about the welfare of people around him. Instead, he built bigger barns to store more stuff. He accumulated as much wealth as he could. He placed his security in what he had, and all that he could get, with an eye looking forward to a wonderful retirement and all the good times ahead. He was unconcerned about God and his neighbor, and death and eternity seemed to be far away. However, it was just around the corner. This is how it will be for those who are like him, who are storing up things for the self, but are not rich toward God. In his commentary on Luke, Dr. Arthur A. Just Jr. writes:

To be rich toward God is *to believe* that God is the giver of all things, including life and salvation. *To show that one believes* is to share with others the gifts God gives. This is the consistent teaching of Jesus in his various words about possessions. Behind the Gospel of grace: forgiveness is bestowed as God's free gift in Jesus Christ. Yet a time of accountability will come when God will ask whether his free gift of forgiveness was appropriated through faith or was abused by the arrogant assumption that God's gifts were personal possessions earned by one's own efforts and therefore at one's disposal to hoard or waste foolishly.

The parable puts a lot of things into perspective. Unfortunately, we are more like the rich fool who was into himself. Of course, there is nothing wrong with using the gifts that God has given to take care of the self and plan for the future. Genesis 41:49 tells us that "Joseph stored up huge quantities of grain, like the sand of the sea" in preparation for seven years of famine." And Proverbs 19:15 says, "Laziness brings on deep sleep, and the shiftless man goes hungry." The problem is when we make ourselves the center of the universe and forget God and other people. We cannot believe in God and his one and only Son who gives everything to us, and then see others in need and not care.

I John 3:16-18 says: "By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth." Our Lord has lived a perfect life on our behalf, has endured the hell that we

deserve for our sins, and has given us an eternal kingdom with eternal treasures. In Christ we have a Shepherd, and in him we lack nothing. How is it that we can be so tight fisted then when it comes to helping our brothers and sisters in Christ and those we come into contact with on a day to day basis?

Because we have Christ and the forgiveness of sins, we will strive to not allow earthly possessions to become a wall that separates us from our relationship with God and others. Indeed, every earthly thing that we possess should be considered in the context of the peace and salvation that we have undeservedly received from God. Whatever principles he has set forward in his word becomes the principles that help us to make right decisions about what we do down here. If Jesus is our everything, our need, our desire, then prayerfully that will push back whatever is a distraction or worry in our lives. What we will eat, what we will drink, our bodies, and what we wear is squarely in his hands. In fact, what we have in Jesus is so great that we are enabled to rejoice when we have merely a crust of bread or the greatest buffet imaginable. When we understand and believe that our real life is found in him alone, it is in that moment that we are able to let go of everything but him. Even anxieties and worries can melt away when we find our contentment in him.

The ravens do not throw out seed or harvest like a farmer, and they do not have barns to store food, and yet God knows each of them and feeds them. Jesus says, "And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?" Consider how the lilies grow. They do not spin thread and produce material and make clothing. Yet Solomon, the most arrayed king of Israel, was not wearing clothing more beautiful than what they wear. Jesus says, "But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith!"

When we are in Christ Jesus, there isn't any reason for us to set our hearts on things down here. There isn't any reason for us to worry about the moment when everything is ours. We are not a people who are far away from the Lord, and who run after anything and everything but him and his word! We are his children who have been given an inheritance that lasts forever. Our Father in heaven knows all of our needs. He knows the best course for us in life. He has perfect timing, and his untraceable paths lead us down the road to our final destination - to be with him in everlasting love. With that kind of care for us, we are taught to trust that he knows what is best for us even in those moments that we identify as "bad." We cast all of our anxieties upon him because he cares for us, and in that care, we can breath a great big sigh of relief. We can say it and mean it: "thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Jesus says:

Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also (Luke 12:32-34)."

Let me say that again, **Where Your Treasure Is, There Your Heart Will Be Also.** The Father through our Good shepherd, is feeding and leading this flock at Pilgrim through the means of grace (the Word, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper). Nothing is more important than these, for these are Christ. In this way, God has ordained to give us what is most important down here. We are bid to seek first his kingdom

and all the treasure there, and with that is attached a promise. Indeed! Seek first the holy mysteries, seek first the kingdom of Christ, and everything else will be added unto you in such a way that it will facilitate your entrance into that kingdom. Only when we realize what we have in him are we enable to loosen up our tight fists. And, when I am talking about tight fists, I am not just talking about the release of money, but the release of who we are as Christian people as we relate to God and others. God always comes first. Do not store up for yourselves treasures for yourselves, but be willing to give because of all that has been given to you. Give not only the gift of money or food or clothing to those who are in need, but with every gift, extend to all the way unto eternal life and the peace that passes all understanding. James writes in his epistle (5:1-6):

Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure in the last days. Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. You have condemned and murdered the righteous person. He does not resist you.

Who in their right mind wants to be that? **Where Your Treasure Is, There Your Heart Will Be Also.** And, if your heart is in Christ, then nothing else really matters, all things are negotiable, all things are expendable, and that means that there is nothing to worry about because your everything is in Jesus and nothing can possibly take that away. It was no wonder why then that Luke could write of the ancient church: "Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common." This was not a government forcing you to give up your stuff to redistribute it, but it was the people of God lovingly and personally caring for one another - hands on caring - because they had been touched by the care of God in his Son Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Pastor Brock Abbott