

Luke 12:13-21
St Mark – July 31, 2022
The Eighth Sunday after Pentecost
Michelle Cox

Rich Toward God

All four of our readings this morning, the verses from the 1st chapter of Ecclesiastes, Psalm 49, a section of Paul and Timothy's letter to the Colossians, and our gospel reading all share one common thought.

Each of us will leave this life and others will gain all of our earthly possessions.

Each reading gets at, in one sense, the old adage, "you can't take it with you". Each one of us can rightly say, "I can't take it with me".

The verses from Ecclesiastes chosen for this morning tell us it is excessively prideful to worry about what will be done with the fruits of our labors, with all the *things* we have accomplished and collected once we've died to this life.

The unknown writer of Ecclesiastes goes on to further chastise us by saying,

"What do mortals get from all the toil and strain with which they toil under the sun? For all their days are full of pain, and their work is a vexation; even at night their minds do not rest. This also is vanity."

Next we read from Psalm 49.

For the ransom of our life is so great, *
that we should never have enough to pay it,
For we see that the wise die also;
like the dull and stupid they perish *
and leave their wealth to those who come after them.

We will die. Jesus, The Christ has defeated death and ransomed all of us who dedicate our lives to him. What wealth we leave on earth will be the concern of those who are left behind.

The letter of Paul and Timothy to the saints, our faithful brothers and sisters in Christ, in Colossae touches on the same point.

They write,

“If you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth...”

Our gospel reading ends with,

“But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God.”

This very night our lives may be demanded of us. All that we have stored up will be given to another.

All four of our readings this morning send a stark message and also a reminder of what, above all, is important.

One of my grandfather’s, grandfather’s Bibles holds many, many notes and reflections. The Bible was a gift to my great-great-grandfather in 1905. One of my delights in reading these notes is the commonality of his writings to my own thoughts today.

One such note reads,

“It’s not what we have, but who we are
Not what we leave, but whom we leave”

It’s not the things we have, but who we are that matters. It’s where we set our minds that brings us to Jesus. We are to,

“Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth...”

These readings also remind us that all we have, all of these things of the earth belong to God. We belong to God.

We are reminded of this in the words we say as we give offerings to God in our service each Sunday. We hear,

“All things come from thee, O Lord” and then we respond,
“and of thine own have we given thee”

Our gospel quotes God as saying,

“You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?”

and then adds, “So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God.”

The rich man isn't a fool because he has prepared for the future. I don't believe that's the point of this reading at all. The rich man is a fool because he hasn't stored up enough, he hasn't stored up nearly enough because he has ignored what is most important.

He hasn't held fast to God, our redeemer who has transformed death into life everlasting. He is not rich toward God.

Many on this earth feel empty. For all that they have they still feel empty. No matter how much they buy or gather, no matter how many things they hold onto they still feel empty and they are.

Every one of us is empty without God. The only thing that quenches the deep need we are each born with is God.

The wise ones, no matter how old they are, recognize the need and then they search for God, The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The wise among us continue to search even after we have brought God into our lives. The wise continue to search for a deeper, fuller relationship with our Lord and savior.

Everyone of us here today is a testament to that searching.

Sometimes our searching brings us to difficult to understand parables or mysteries such as the nature of prayer, but sometimes the teachings are easily clear. Today's Epistle reading, the letter from Paul and Timothy to the Colossians isn't obscure in the least. We are to get rid of “anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language.”

We are to be truthful with each other, because we have given up our old selves and have been renewed in the image of our creator.

In our baptism and when we renew our baptismal vows, each time we proclaim Christ we affirm that we are no longer the person known to others in the past.

We are Christ's own and we are to act like it.

We have been renewed. In that renewal there are no longer the divisions the world recognizes so readily, but Christ is all and in all!

Christ is all and in all!. We are called by Jesus to be known as Christians by our love for one another.

Am I known as a Christian by my love? Are you?

When I fail and I have, when you fail and we all will, I pray that we won't give up. That we will keep trying to meet the goal. To be consumed with the Love of God.

What matters when we each have our lives demanded of us is what treasures we have stored up. Not how much grain, or how much money, but the treasures of being close to God.

What place does God hold in our lives? For some God is an afterthought or no thought at all.

Or does God come to mind upon first waking up and is God our last thought before we sleep?

Do we always remember and hold close to God? Is God what is most important in our lives?

In the end, when we pass from this life to the next, when we leave all that we own behind there is one and only one thing we will take with us.

Our soul. Our soul that belongs to God.