

Julie's sermon – Luke 12: 13-21 – Sunday 11th October

Every day of our lives we are being pulled in a number of different directions – we have family responsibilities; work commitments; obligations to our friends and of course the church. Then on top of that there are always worries about whether we have what we need to survive. Do we have enough food, clothing and other stuff or do we need more? We are often left wondering, “What is really important in life?” And the media doesn't help does it?! Advertisements telling us we can and should have more are on our TV screens every day; fast cars, dream holidays, ways to improve our bodies and how to get the most up to date technology are at our fingertips. And to “help” us get these things there are lots of company's out there ready to lend us the money at exorbitant interest rates. You see if you want it then there is always someone out there willing to help you to get it.

And the man in our story from Luke's gospel thought he had found a way get what he wanted!

Jesus was teaching his disciples and others about who he was and what it meant to follow him when he was rudely interrupted by this man.

"Teacher, get my brother to divide the inheritance with me."

I can just imagine Jesus stopping what he was saying to the others and looking at this man. I am sure you will agree that Jesus was a patient man but sometimes even he got a bit annoyed and I can hear the irritation in his voice – who appointed me as judge – don't be greedy because it really doesn't pay!

Then to get his point across he does what he does best and he tells a story. Now on first glance this story is about a rich fool but on closer inspection it is about a fool who just happened to be rich! The foolishness of the man was not in his wealth – he had earned that fair and square through hard work and good management and it was his to do with as he wanted. The foolishness came about when he forgot who had given him all that he had and he thought he could do everything on his own. He was a fool because he was selfish and ungrateful and did not give God a second thought!

He thought his newly acquired riches were all about him and him alone – if you read it he says “my crops . . . my barns . . . my goods . . . my soul;” everything is him, and nothing is God. The words "I" and "my" are used 11 times in that short story.

As the lovely Terry Wogan used to say it was all about me, me, me, me, me, me! And it is the same today. As a society we want more and more, all the time thinking it's ours. What we have to remember is we don't own anything. Whatever we have is lent to us by God; we are the stewards for God's property. Our gardens belong to God, our houses belong to God, our fast cars and must have technology belongs to God. You see without God we would have nothing – nothing at all. And when we die we take nothing with us – we own nothing in the next life!

“Leo Tolstoy once wrote a story about a successful peasant farmer who was not satisfied with his lot. He wanted more of everything. One day he received a novel offer. For 1000 roubles, he could buy all the land he could walk around in a day. The only catch in the deal was that he had to be back at his starting point by sundown.

Early the next morning he started out walking at a fast pace. By midday he was very tired, but he kept going, covering more and more ground. Well into the afternoon he realized that his greed had taken him far from the starting point. He quickened his pace and as the sun began to sink low in the sky, he began to run, knowing that if he did not make it back by sundown the opportunity to become an even bigger landholder would be lost.

As the sun began to sink below the horizon he came within sight of the finish line. Gasping for breath, his heart pounding, he called upon every bit of strength left in his body and staggered across the line just before the sun disappeared. He immediately collapsed, blood streaming from his mouth. In a few

minutes he was dead.

Afterwards, his servants dug a grave. It was not much over six feet long and three feet wide and this was all the land the farmer now had!

You see greed gets us nowhere and that is what Jesus was trying to say in that story.

The point of the story is that this guy was planning to store more than he needed, to, as he put it, eat, drink and be merry. He says, "What should I do for I have no place to store my crops?" But wait a minute! He did have a place he had barns. The problem is that his harvest has been so great that his present storage facilities will not hold all of the grain. So he decides to tear them down and build bigger ones. Surely if the barns he had; held enough grain for him to live off before; then once full there would be enough again and he could have given the surplus away to his neighbours and those who were less fortunate than himself. He didn't give anyone else a thought he just wanted it all for himself! He was just plain greedy.

He thought he had years to enjoy his new found wealth but as we heard he didn't even have another day – he died that very night. None of us know what will happen from one day to the next.

The most dangerous word in the English language is "tomorrow." No one knows if tomorrow will ever come for them. There is an old story of 3 apprentice demons who were to be sent to earth on a mission. They were telling Satan what they proposed to do. One said, "I will tell everyone there is no God." "It won't work," Satan said. "In their hearts they know there is. The second one said, "I will tell them there is no hell." "That won't work, either," Satan said. "Even in this life they have tasted the agony and sorrow of hell." The third one said, "I will tell them there is no hurry." "Go," said Satan. "Tell them that and you will ruin them by the millions."

You see we always think we have tomorrow! But who knows? So share what you have now – don't be greedy and store up things you will never use – be generous with all God's provisions and help others to know the goodness of God.

When I was reading up on stuff for this sermon I came across this little message:-

If you have had an education and know how to read, then you are more blessed than over two billion people in the world that cannot read anything at all.

If you woke up this morning with more health than illness, you are more blessed than the million who won't survive this week.

If you have food in your refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof over your head and a place to sleep, you are richer than 75% of this world.

If you have money in the bank, in your wallet, and spare change lying in a dish, you are among the top 8% of the world's wealthy.

And if you can attend a church meeting without fear of harassment, arrest, torture, or death, You are more blessed than almost three billion people in the world.

So be thankful for what you have and don't be greedy for more and listen to the message Jesus has for us today and go and be generous people of God. Amen