

Scripture Reading:  
Luke 12:32-40

### **Storing Up Community**

So once again we find a parable of Jesus speaking to something almost everyone in the room has experienced, a dispute over money. This whole parable came out of a family squabble brought to Jesus. Jesus is not going to bite the bullet and choose one over the other. He sees the error of their ways. They should be remembering, celebrating, giving thanks for a shared inheritance but instead it has turned into division and greed. And so Jesus responds as he often does with a story of a man “so enraptured with his good fortune that he ends up all alone.”<sup>1</sup>

I’m not convinced that this parable is entirely about money or wealth I think it is more about relationship (and then about how disputes over money ruin them). Notice this farmer does not seem to have anyone to share his wealth with, he doesn’t seem to know of a good charity, or even a niece or brother who could use the help. He is simply going to store it all up for himself. If he keeps all the wealth and abundant harvest to himself in the long run he will be able to bask in it.

We can be so guilty of this can’t we. As individuals and as churches we think this way all the time. As ministers we often recognize that the churches that argue about money the most are the ones who have it. Blessed with an abundant harvest all we can think of is how do we ourselves get the most out of it. Good stewardship is important but lost relationship over money is devastating.

Lets be honest, The way I see it is the farmer in our story is rather narcissistic. Perhaps that is why he has no one else in his life - he has pushed all the unworthies away. Because of his blatant narcissism the “farmer falls prey to the notion that he can secure his own future. That he needs no one, depends on no one, and can go it alone. Which is why God calls him foolish. Because, in the end, not only is he not immune to death, but he will die alone, and all that he has stored up will not comfort or protect him, nor will it go to others who loved and respected him and can put it to good use, but instead it will all turn to dust in the wind.”<sup>2</sup>

We don’t really need to be reminded that we can’t take it with us do we? Are we at all aware that the whole world will be richer if we offer of what we have. How can we say that we love God if we do not love others. “God, to paraphrase Martin Luther, needs neither our good works nor our wealth, but our neighbour does.”

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.davidlose.net/2016/07/pentecost-11-c-from-isolation-to-community/>

<sup>2</sup> IBID

For me a key component of faith is community. I have spent a lifetime struggling with our Western individualistic mindset. (Perhaps that is part of the reason I married a Filipino - they understand the importance of community). I worry about the world my children will grow up in but I am at least thankful that it seems to me that many folks I meet are discovering that we cannot do it alone. We need each other, we are called to be in relationship with one another. It how we were created. This parable is about the community in which we find sustenance and comfort, love, help and hope. This parable is about being together and caring for one another so that we might discover God in our experiences of life and love.

We do not live in a world of trust right now, we live in a world of aggression and fear. I hear it in conversations in the park with other mothers, I hear it on the news, I hear it from Christians and atheists alike. Fear is marketed to us full force in the political arenas today. But fear in hindering, it snuffles us, it keeps us from accomplishing the great things we were created to accomplish.

I saw this happen with Amihan this week. She just finished her first set of swimming lessons. When she was younger she played in the water fearlessly. she had no trouble going under with us and she loved every moment. Unfortunately the business of life has taken away our regular swim time and so I was excited to get her into lessons - getting them as early in the morning as I could so that I could get to work at a decent hour. But, Something happened to Ami in the time away from our family swims - she developed fear. I imagine it has to do with her age and the sudden discovery that some things hurt. She no longer will put her face in the water. Oh it has been hard to watch as a parent on the sidelines (especially one who was a fish for the first 25 years of her life - I spent half my life in the pool or swimming off the boat). The first week of lessons Amihan loved. The second week however Grandma and Grandpa came up on Tuesday to watch and unfortunately after the lesson she had four adults reminding her that she used to put her face in, that she knows how to swim. Well the next morning I had to stoop so low I bribed her with candy after the lesson to get her out the door and into the pool. Fear halted her. It froze her up. The fear of the water maybe, but the real problem came with the fear of disappointing the people she loves and wants to impress the most, the halting fear came out of not succeeding. It caused stress and tension in our relationship as we argued for three morning to get her to go. Fear stifles growth. It does the same to us.

As we get older fear causes us to separate ourselves from one another. There is good reason the phrases “Do not be afraid” or fear not is found in the bible 365 times (Perhaps it is because most of us need to hear it every day). David Lose argues that “do not be afraid” is not offered simply to bolster our individual courage but to make it easier for us to turn to one another with our fears and hopes and dreams and needs in order to form a community. The Bible warns us against fear because it’s really hard to care for your neighbour and create a community when you are afraid.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> IBID

What is life if we are rich in money and poor in family and relationships. What is life if we choose to see our own way of doing things as more important than coming together in love and relationship? Community is rarely easy. It means putting up with people who do, believe and see things differently than you do, but it also means you are never alone. The task of church is to be a loving, nurturing, worshiping community that gathers around God's grace and mercy so that we can offer it to all creation. Christianity is always about giving, loving relationship. It is never about keeping all that I have so that I can live comfortably myself. We have a choice as individuals and as churches. We can choose to figure out how to make the best of what we have so that we ourselves can be comfortable, knowing full well that eventually we will die and what we have lived for will blow away with the wind or we can discover the richness of abundant community where we experience God's love and grace in and through one another. May we choose love.  
Amen.