The Parable of the Rich Fool

Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.”

But he said to him, “Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?”

And he said to them, “Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.” Then he told them a parable: “The land of a rich man produced abundantly.

And he thought to himself, ‘What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?’ Then he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull 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, ‘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.”

Do Not Worry

He said to his disciples, “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? If then you are not able to do so small a thing as that, why do you worry about the rest?

Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith! And do not keep striving for what you are to eat and what you are to drink, and do not keep worrying. For it is the nations of the world that strive after all these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, strive for his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. “Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Sermon Notes:
MONDAY 9.7.15  Galatians 5:13-23
Here Paul describes the vast spiritual freedom Christ offers each of us. This freedom is not a freedom to do whatever we want. Instead, Christ offers everyone a freedom to live by the Spirit rather than by the sinful nature. We can live free of the deadly sins like greed and envy by finding our true selves, led by God’s Spirit, and bearing the Spirit’s fruit.

- As the City of St Augustine commemorates the 450th anniversary of its founding by Spain, it is important for the church to recognize how the early Spanish-Christian settlers in St. Augustine misused and abused their power. In the name of Christ, Pedro Menendez and his men offered three options to the indigenous people and the French whom they met when they arrived: Convert to Christianity, be enslaved or be killed. This is an example of human greed, pride and the sinful nature, not the fruit of God’s spirit. This is but one chapter of a broken past that we’ve inherited in St. Augustine. What feelings arise for you as you reflect on our human propensity to live out of our sinful nature in the name of Christ? Have you ever asked Jesus to bless your plans instead of asking Jesus to show you his plan to bless you?
- The good news of Jesus is that our broken past does not determine our future. In what ways do you struggle with the sinful nature? Which fruit of the Spirit do you most want God to grow in you during the rest of 2015?

Prayer: O God who gives us all we need and more, thank you for the blessings in my life. Forgive me for comparing the gifts you give me with those you give anyone else. Help me to love others with a love that delights in the good things in their lives and bless them with my prayers. In Jesus name, Amen.

TUESDAY 9.8.15  1Timothy 6:3-10
In New Testament times, as today, some people saw religious teaching as simply one more chance for profit. The solution to their greed, and ours, this letter says, is not just outward changes in behavior. The key is inside of us. True wealth comes from a contented spirit, not our wallet or our bank account.

- Verse 7 states a basic premise for the whole Bible’s teaching about greed. How “permanent” do some of your main possessions feel to you? How vital is that sense of permanence to your inner security? How has your inner “need” for your possessions changed through the years and why?
- In verse 10, we read that “the love of money” (not money itself) is the root of all kinds of evil. Whom have you known who had plenty of money but seemed free of “the love of money”? Have you known (or been) a person who, even if living in relative poverty, felt the tug of “the love of money”?

Prayer: Lord, teach me godliness with contentment. Thank you for the gift of life and for providing everything I need to follow you and do your will. Give me an eagerness for humility and a desire to use what you have given me for your good purpose. Amen.

WEDNESDAY 10.9.15  Deuteronomy 15:7-11
God called the people of Israel to a level of generosity that neither they nor we have ever fully lived up to. Jesus quoted part of this passage—“The poor will always be with you.” Some would use those words to argue against generosity. That argument only works if we ignore the whole second half of verse 11!

- In verse 10 we find this idea: God doesn’t just care about what we do, but about the spirit in which we do it. With what kind of spirit do you do your giving? What have you found that increases your joy in giving?
- In his book Seven, Jeff Cook suggests that greed is about getting (and hoarding) more than you need, while gluttony is about consuming too much. How do you understand the “evil thoughts” against which Deuteronomy warns (v.9)? What rewards might come with the type of generosity these verses call for?

Prayer: Lord, you have shown me that true life and joy comes from giving myself away rather than anxiously protecting what I have. Help me trust you with my present and future so that I may be the extravagantly generous person you created me to be. Amen.
THURSDAY 9.10.15  1Corinthians 12:12-27
Paul described Christians as a “body,” with Jesus Christ as the head. Feet, hands, eyes and internal organs each have a unique role to play in our physical body. God calls you to fill the role(s) in the Body of Christ you are best equipped to fill. Being content with serving as the “body part” you truly are is the best way to find joy and effectiveness.

- Usually we do okay in the body of Christ at living out “If one part suffers, every part suffers with it.” We pray for each other and show caring in various ways. What have you experienced as far as “if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it”? How do you feel when someone else is honored, especially if your role feels unseen?

- Paul’s image of jealous, moping body parts (verses 15-18) becomes funny if you try to picture such a thing really happening with your hands or feet. Of course, it WAS really happening among the Christians in Corinth. It’s been happening ever since. When have you seen envy limit a group’s, or a person’s, usefulness?

**Prayer:** O God, thank you for valuing me, even when I struggle to value myself. Help me to love myself as you have loved me. Give me contentment in being the person you’ve made me to be, and in serving you and others the ways I am gifted to do. Then, help me to love my neighbor as I love myself. I thank you that your ways are so much higher and greater than mine. Amen.

FRIDAY 9.11.15  1 Corinthians 13:4-7
Love does not envy, Paul writes. How could it? Love does not delight in evil—but one of envy’s worst qualities is the hidden delight we feel when something bad happens to a person we envy. Love keeps no record of wrongs—envy is fixated on keeping score. Love is kind—sadly, envy feels that it can’t afford the luxury of kindness.

- In which of your day-to-day relationships are you able to live out most of the qualities of love that Paul lists readily and easily? In which relationships is it a struggle to show these qualities, even with gritted teeth? How can God’s love help us to grow in our capacity to love more naturally?

- Paul also says that love does not boast and is not self-seeking. Have you ever wished that others would envy something about you or your life? Is it possible that one big reason we are tempted by boasting and self-seeking is a desire to produce envy in others?

**Prayer:** Lord, I confess my desire not only to be thought well of, but to be envied by others. Forgive me for minimizing the gifts of other people and teach me how to love them as you love them. Open my eyes to recognize and appreciate the gifts of those I consider “unimportant.” Save me from envy by opening my eyes to recognize and appreciate the gifts you have given me as well. Amen.

[On this 9-11 anniversary day, remember to pray for our enemies, for an end to war, for those whose lives are directly impacted by wars – the refugees, the military, the aid workers and their families]

There is an old Jewish folktale about a cat that stole a cheese from a market. A dog saw the robbery and wanted some for himself, so he and the cat fought; but there was no victor. They decided to get the fox to settle their quarrel. The fox proposed they simply divide the cheese. The dog and cat agreed. After the fox divided the cheese in half, the dog protested that his portion was smaller. The cat agreed, and the fox bit off some of the cat’s share. The cat then protested that his portion was now too small. The fox agreed and took a bite from the dog’s portion. This squabbling went on so long that eventually the fox had eaten all the cheese.

- Has there been a time in your life when greed and envy cost you losing out on something good? A relationship, friendship, or even a job perhaps. Since that happened, have you grown in your relationship with Christ? How do you think God would want you to handle that situation differently?

**Prayer:** God, help me to let go of those things that are keeping me from loving you and loving others.