

8 Pentecost C

Ecclesiastes 1:2,12-14; 2:18-23

Psalms 49:1-12

Colossians 3:1-11

Luke 12:13-21

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Grace and peace to you from Christ Jesus. Amen.

It doesn't appear in this morning's gospel story, but this is essentially a baptismal story. What I mean by that is, if baptism is a moment of new beginning that marks a transition, then this story describes how we *live* that; being in Christ means we are called to examine our lives from a different perspective than we used to. The trouble is, this call is extremely difficult to undertake, we struggle with it, we have a hard time interpreting it, we resist it, because we live with immense pressure to conform to worldly models for living.

If we honestly reflect on our culture we know well that it is driven by consumerism. Every product, television show, commercial, billboard, webpage, newspaper, magazine is geared to one thing: getting us to spend money. And it's done by undermining our sense of being and security.

In a consumeristic society such as ours we are told, repeatedly:

- that our bodies are not what they should be,
- that our home or car or wardrobe or furnishings need to be updated,
- that we should work hard to make money in order to spend it or invest it or save it.
- We are also regularly told that the world (including our homes, neighbourhoods, etc.) are dangerous places. The sales of insurance and security systems is booming business.

And the more we hear that we are inadequacy, the busier and more expensive our lives get as we try to measure up to impossible standards. The more we hear how unsafe we are, more we become afraid and turn inward – it's almost like we behave as a herd of wild animals where only the strongest survive. Now, that may appeal to some, but let's be clear: it is not the way of Christ. And if it's not Jesus' way, then it cannot be our way.

Your life isn't made more secure by what you own— even when you have more than you need (v.15.)

When Jesus speaks of *the things we own*, he's not just talking about the stuff that surrounds us. He's also speaking to our possessiveness of knowledge, of our bodies, of our will. The more stuff we own doesn't make us secure, neither does how much we know, or how fit or beautiful we are, or how hard working. The problem for the farmer in our parable was just this. He "owned" his entire life and being, without leaving room for God.

Your life isn't made more secure by what you own— even when you have more than you need (v.15.)

What a powerful word to us today – we who most certainly have more than enough. Over and over again studies have proven that the more we have the more we want. The more we have the more we fear losing it. The more we have the more entitled we feel to having it or that we've earned it and deserve it. That's why when a stock market crashes sadly some investors take their lives. That's why it's so easy to make a spectacle on TV of hoarders who can't move around their homes or of overflowing storage facilities that are auctioned off to the highest bidder.

If we think we've done well in the world, because we have a large home, have a fat investment account, or a new car then we have bought into an illusion as the author of Ecclesiastes describes. We've only fooled ourselves. We've become the foolish farmer of Luke's story. And you know what? We all do it.

What lies underneath all this possessiveness? Is it greed? Swollen egos? Fear? Loneliness? Inadequacy? I suppose it's simply that we are human, imperfect, quickly tempted and often looking for an easier way.

Pour water into the font.

This is no ordinary water. It's Jesus water. It's part of God's creation. It's on fire with the Spirit. It's our water. Here, free for taking and touching. This water isn't sold by the bottle. There is no price. But, once we've drank from this well, our eyes are opened and we will see ourselves differently and every part of how we live. It's not some magic fix – we are still tempted and make mistakes – but it makes life different.

It teaches us that God sees us through a different lens than we see ourselves. As we come to worship, as we pray, read God's stories, grow with one another through these things we come to feel a deep inner security, a profound belonging, we understand that we don't need affirmation from the world. We begin to open up like blossoming flowers to community, we embrace our imperfection, we learn forgiveness, we care for those the world would rather forget. We view life in every shape and

color, even where it is bent or broken, as important and part of a larger whole.

But just as this water is real, it is a physical thing, so too is a life of faith. Being a believer isn't just a theory or a good story or a fantasy or a part of our life that happens on Sunday. It's like breathing – we can't *not* do it. It's also like gardening, it's hard work! The soil gets underneath our fingernails and our knees are red and bumpy from kneeling, our back aches from bending, but then there's nothing quite like a taste of a home grown carrot or tomato or apple. In the same way, faith is hard work and an *intentional* practice that touches every part of our day. And it is so beautiful!

And so through life we are asked to choose. We're asked to think carefully about the places and situations we find ourselves in. Will we join with the bullies taunting in the school yard or board room? Or will we remember what Jesus taught us and stand with those who are considered less?

Will we respond to those who are different or new to this place with expectations to be like us, or will we see the wonder and beauty of God in diversity?

Will we build bigger barns to stash away all we have or will we choose to remember that it's actually all God's in the first place and be generous and purposeful and trustful through offerings of time, talent and treasure?

(Side note: I think it's important to note that having money isn't problematic. Being wealthy isn't problematic. Having things isn't problematic. But, they are problematic when they control and direct our lives.)

Will we strive to be molded to the world's image or the cross?

The world would want us to be selfish, it tempts us to think that if we're ahead of others then we are better, more worthy, untouchable. The cross however, reminds us that in love we cannot fail, in love we are already secure. In love we are already wealthy.

Jesus has invited us into the wealth of God – *there* is more security, love, acceptance than we could ever need. May we in turn share the abundance given to us. Amen.