



ALL SAINTS' CHURCH

THIS SUNDAY July 28 & BEYOND”

“Unexpected abundance? Trust in God with it, beyond yourself”



In the Gospel reading for this coming Sunday at All Saints’ church (to which you are invited to attend) it’s hard to know for sure why the man interrupted Jesus’ teaching to the disciples. For sure, in my reading, it was not just because the stressed man with a family estate squabble said, “Hey, look. A rabbi. Let’s ask him to settle the issue for us.” The closest I’ve come to

understanding the motive for the request is that the man had seen Jesus heal every sickness, cast out every demon, raise people from the dead, and utter unimaginable wisdom about life. And so, he could certainly arbitrate, like one of the Judges of Israel of old. That sounds good, doesn’t it?

Well, my attempts at deducing the man’s reasoning for asking is suddenly put to the side, because Jesus refuses to enter into the family squabble and instead uses the situation as an opportunity to teach about the seduction of wealth! Which, of course, in his inimitable way, is Jesus’ answer to the man, and to the man’s brother, regarding their family battle over their family inheritance.

If it had been me, realizing that a family inheritance squabble means that the patriarch of the family probably just died, I might have been tempted to shout back sarcastically, “So how’s your dad doing?” Good thing Jesus is Jesus, and you and I are not, eh?!

Back to Jesus, he goes on to share this famous parable about a farmer who has had VERY abundant harvests, has MORE THAN HE KNOWS WHAT TO DO WITH, and the solution that the farmer comes up with. The parable will end for us listeners with a wincing twist: the sudden death of the rich farmer and the story moral being about how much more he could have done with that richness besides put it under a bushel and look at it every once in a while (and retire, and build a bigger pool).

Before we go on please note that the farmer has not gained his wealth illegally or by taking advantage of others. Further, he is not portrayed as particularly greedy.

Indeed, he seems to be truly surprised by his good fortune. This is not about GAINING improperly or immorally. This is about Kingdom stewardship. After all, what is wrong about building larger barns to store away some of today's bounty for a potentially leaner tomorrow? Isn't that the nature of the dream given to Joseph in Egypt which got him the incredible position of steward of all Egypt??

But now we DO hear exactly THESE things in the parable:

First, notice the farmer's consistent focus throughout the conversation he has with himself: "What should *I* do, for *I* have nowhere to store *my* crops?" And 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...."

Self, self, self. As the parable portrays him, there is no thought to using the abundance to help others, no expression of gratitude for his good fortune, no recognition of God at all. The farmer has fallen prey to worshipping the most popular of gods: the Unholy Trinity of "me, myself, and I." This leads to, and is most likely caused by, a second mistake. He is not foolish because he makes provision for the future; he is foolish because he believes that by his wealth he can secure his future: "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry."

The farmer is called "fool" not because of his wealth nor ambition but rather because he accords finite things infinite value. His plans for insulating himself, and living the good life on what he thinks is his grand ability and good business decision making, will now come up empty - which comes that very night! - it all proves inadequate.

What's different than any of our modern strivings to provide and secure? Well, nothing.

Ultimately, nothing can save us from death, whether timely, or as in the parable, untimely. And, as the author of Ecclesiastes would make note of, once you are dead and gone you ultimately will lose control of all that you have gathered, no matter how good your attorney might be, and it will become subject to the mercy of the wisdom of those who follow you --- who weren't the ones who made your money and built your silos in the first place.

Which should answer the question of the man asking Jesus about his family inheritance being divided.

Why are you striving about something you didn't have in the first place, you didn't build, and you didn't have control over? It is so difficult sometimes to deal with the windfall. And it is – as the parable pushes us to hear – a matter of faith and money in the same sentence.

Feeling bad at this point? Don't be. That's not the parable point. Certainly, we are asked to consider how and if we give thanks to God for what we have been given, even our very lives. But, you know, the further consideration for ourselves in reflection is not, "Is material abundance bad?" The answer is no. Because, in fact, many have been GIVEN abundance in order to do the right thing with it! But our reflection rather should be, "Is our material abundance sufficient to meet the weight of meaning, significance, and joy that we seek?" Can our wealth secure a relative degree of comfort? Certainly. Can it grant to us confidence that we are worthy of love and honor and in right relationship with God and neighbor? Certainly not. Only as we recognize that the gifts of ultimate worth, dignity, meaning, and relationship are just that - gifts offered freely by God - can we hope to place our relative wealth in perspective and be generous with it toward others. Look beyond yourself, trust in God, do the right thing.

Fr. Robert G. Eaton, Interim Rector

Readings for this Sunday – The Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

Ecclesiastes 1:12-14, 2:1, 18-23 Psalm 49:1-11 Colossians 3:5-17, Luke 12:13-21

CALENDAR

SUNDAY: Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

8:30a Low Mass (Church)
10:30a Solemn High Mass (Church)
AA Meeting
7:00p Little Apple Group (Parish Hall)

—The entrance to the church is on 6th Avenue—

Note: Coffee Hour & Fellowship follow the Mass in the Parish Hall.

TUESDAY: Noon Mass (St. Mary's Chapel)

FRIDAY AA Meetings
8:00p Ladies' Group (Fireside Room)
8:15p Men's Group (Parish Hall)

SUNDAY The Ninth Sunday after Pentecost
8:00am Low Mass
10:30am Solemn Mass
AA Meeting
7:00p Little Apple Group (Parish Hall)

An Anglo-Catholic Parish in the Episcopal Diocese of San Diego
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