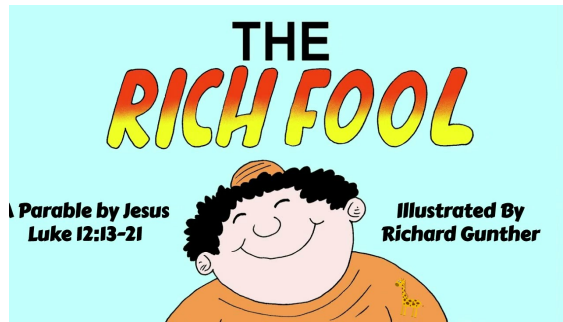


LOOKING AT LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GOSPEL

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**EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY
in ORDINARY TIME**

31st July 2022

Luke 12:13 Someone in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.” ¹⁴ But he said to him, “Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?” ¹⁵ 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.” ¹⁶ Then he told them a parable: “The land of a rich man produced abundantly. ¹⁷ And he thought to himself, ‘What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?’ ¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.’ ²⁰ 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?’ ²¹ So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God.”

INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

The Parable of the Rich Fool is found only in Luke’s Gospel and reflects the author’s intense interest in our attitudes to money and possessions. The whole section 12:13-40 should be read for a full picture.

KIND OF WRITING

The excerpt begins with a very short anecdote, which provides the occasion for the parable. The parable itself lacks the destabilising effect of the authentic Jesus tradition, so there is no real puzzle or paradox to figure out. In its place, we have a wisdom teaching.

COMMENTARY

Verse 15 The verses which follow sustain this teaching: Jesus 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* (Luke 12:22-27)

Verse 19 The sheer complacency here is the problem.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

If any lesson were to be learned from times of recession, surely it would resemble today’s Gospel. Riches are precarious; material security is unstable; dreams of untroubled longevity are soon dispelled by “events.” Paradoxically, our experience of life as fickle can take us in quite opposite directions. We might be tempted to plunge ourselves into more enjoyment of the present moment, as St Paul caustically observes: “let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” (1Corinthians 15:32 NET) The road less travelled is to become “rich towards God.” It still means enjoying and living the present moment, but in a completely different, deeper and ultimately more lasting way.

KIERAN O’MAHONY OSA—tarsus.ie

At the start of the gospel Jesus refuses to get involved in a family squabble over an inheritance. It is not his role to be a legislator; his role is to proclaim the vision of God’s kingdom and in the parable which he tells we see the connection between the problem he was asked to solve and that kingdom, for it is on the theme of greed or avarice. The man in the story is troubled because he might not be able to take full advantage of the harvest he has enjoyed. In his discussion with himself it is interesting to note how many times the words ‘I’ and ‘my’ are found. He is totally self-obsessed and so excludes God and the neighbour in his reasoning. In this situation he is not prepared for the ultimate reality, his own death. Jesus points to the meaning of the parable by contrasting the idea of building up riches for oneself with that of being rich in what matters most: one’s relationship with God.

SEAN GOAN — *Let the Reader Understand. Year C*

The parable has two moments, each of which can unveil reality to you.

There is the moment when the man decided to build bigger barns,

and the one when God called him.

This second moment has two aspects:

his soul was demanded of him,

and he had to face the question, "This hoard of yours,

whose will it be?"

SCRIPTURE PRAYERS

"The ultimate purpose of trade and industry is to serve our fellow human beings by creating goods and services to meet their needs." ...George Carey, Archbishop of Canterbury

Lord, we pray that your Church may always be the voice of Jesus in our modern world,

challenging our contemporaries to watch and be on their guard against avarice of any kind,

and reminding them that our lives are not made secure by what we own,

even when we have more than we need.

"Hell is not to love any more." ...Dorothy Day

Lord, the worst experience in the whole world

is to have a demand made for our souls

and then to realize that we have stored up treasures for ourselves in place of making ourselves rich in your sight.

"By admitting death into our lives we enlarge and enrich them." ...Etty Hillesum, Jewish woman who died in a concentration camp, 1943

Lord, remind us always of that dread moment when you will say to us:

"This very night demand will be made of your soul."

When our horizons are not limited by the big barns

in which we have stored our grain and all our goods, we can become truly rich.

MICHEL DE VERTEUIL – *Lectio Divina on the Sunday Gospels, Year C*

There is an Irish phrase which says: "You never see a trailer being pulled after a hearse." This would be a good way to sum up today's parable. Jesus tells us about a rich man with a storage problem. Nothing is more destructive to the human spirit than a preoccupation with accumulating more and more wealth, in whatever form it takes. It is usually driven by insecurity and a lack of peace. We try to constantly fill the gap in our lives which can only be filled by God.

A preoccupation with storing up stuff also affects our relationship with the world, especially with the poor.

When nature is viewed solely as a source of profit and gain, this has serious consequences for society. This has engendered immense inequality, injustice and acts of violence against the majority of humanity.... Completely at odds with this model are the ideals of harmony, justice, fraternity and peace as proposed by Jesus. (Laudato Si 82)

Go Deeper

We start with ourselves. Can you declutter your life?

Look around your home this week, and see what could be donated to a charity shop.

TRÍONA DOHERTY & JANE MELLETT - Go Deeper

What shall I do?

The man in the parable does not seem to have wife, children or neighbours or friends. He is only concerned about his welfare and his wealth: his harvest, his property, his barns, his life.

He does not realise that he is a walled-in human being, a prisoner of a way of thinking that dehumanises him.

The life of the rich man is a failure and foolishness. He builds bigger barns, but cannot expand the world of his concerns. He increases his wealth, but diminishes and impoverishes his life. He amasses goods but knows nothing of friendship, generous life, joy and solidarity. He knows neither how to give nor how to share - only to hoard. Is there anything human about this kind of a life?

The economic crisis we are going through is not just one ore crisis. It is a **sign of the times** that we must interpret in the light of the gospels. It is not difficult to hear the voice of God in the depths of our consciences "Enough of so much folly and such cruel neglect of solidarity." We will never overcome our economic crises without a struggle for a profound change in our lifestyle. We must live more austere. We must share our wealth.

JOSÉ A PAGOLA - *Following in the Footsteps of Jesus, Year C*

POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. "One's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions", said Jesus. What have you found by experience to be more important in life than possessions? What brought this home to you?

2. "Be on your guard against all kinds of greed". Perhaps you have seen how greed can lead to trouble in public life, in family life, and in the personal life of individuals. What has helped you to guard against greed? What benefits have you experienced when you were less greedy?

3. The message of the parable could be summed up in saying "If you want to give God a laugh, tell him your plans". Life takes many twists and turns we do not anticipate. When have you found that have had to change your plans because of unexpected circumstances? What has helped you to be flexible and resourceful at such times?

JOHN BYRNE OSA - *Intercom*

Pope Francis

But the current [economic] model, with its emphasis on success and self-reliance, does not appear to favour an investment in efforts to help the slow, the weak or the less talented to find opportunities in life. (The Joy of the Gospel 209)