

2018 NL4 Summer Stewardship Luke  
18-09-02 Luke 12:13-34

God's beloved people, grace and peace to you in the name of our crucified and risen savior,  
Jesus Christ.....Amen.....

Today is the 3<sup>rd</sup> of three Sundays this summer on the topic of generosity. Jesus talked a lot about money and possessions and priorities because he knew that people had questions about how to live a faithful life in God and for our neighbors, while at the same time making a living and enjoying life.

Jesus wasn't necessarily trying to make anyone feel guilty; he was constantly calling people into a deeper life of faithfulness in God. He was trying to teach...., to reassure...., to save you...., because he knew that we are constantly bombarded with worry...., grief...., fear...., guilt...., and greed. So these "money and possessions talks" are important for us today, even if our context and our self-justifications might be different. We still have worry, grief and fear.//

J.K. Rowling of Harry Potter fame, has more recently written a wise character, Newt Skamander, who is a philosopher and animal lover, he said, "*My philosophy is if you worry, you suffer twice.*"

Worry drains us of energy and productivity – how many sleepless nights lead to comatose days? All because we've spent too much time in worry.

Grief was the topic 4 weeks ago, when Jesus asked the rich man to sell his possessions and give the money to the poor – he went away grieving. The teaching of the Rabbis says, "*Anyone who gives to the poor, loans to God.*" Though all that we have is gift from God.

And today we hear of fear: fear of not having enough...., fear of missing out...., and Jesus encourages us to not to.....to "*be on guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.*" Greed is a silent green partner of fear.... And our lives aren't measured by how much we have –

Jesus begins with a parable:

the land of a rich man produced abundantly;

he was overjoyed, but had nowhere to store the bountiful harvest;

so he tore down his barns, built new ones, filled them with grain,

and sat back contentedly

saying, "*NOW I have ample goods stored up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.*"

There is so much sin in this!!! First of all, who provided the bumper crop?... God did. The rich man's LAND.... AND GOD.... did the work – the sowers tossed the seed as always, and God watered and brought out the sun!!

Then the man stored it all instead of sharing any.

Then he looked at it and decided that he was done for many years and he could live a life of self-indulgence and sloth. The abundance that God provided led him not to praise God and serve his neighbor, but to turn inward and focus on himself, to hoard and to selfishly consume without regard for anyone else.

So God confronts him. "*You FOOL!*" Whose is this really???. *This very night your life is being demanded of you!!*" This has long been interpreted as God telling the man that tonight he is dying.....

But it doesn't even have to be that dramatic. Our lives are demanded of us in many ways:

in the love a child....,  
in the service to a neighbor,  
in the friendship of a stranger;  
in the integrity of faith or of just plain old character;  
greed and self-centeredness don't help in any of these situations and instead drive us  
farther and farther into our own cocoons of solitude.

But a Christian's life is one of faithfulness and service – our whole life long – it doesn't end. We don't retire from serving God..... some would say that in retirement, the opportunities for service ramp up all the more!! Even when you are in a retirement community, you still sit with people at meals... and see folks in the halls who may need a kind word or a listening ear..., or healing prayers.

Jesus goes on, "*So don't worry....*"..... "*Your life is being demanded of you..... but don't fear....*" God even takes care of the ravens and the lilies, how much more will God feed and clothe you – *you of LITTLE FAITH!*

This may sound harsh. Who likes to be accused of having "little faith?" And if it's true, what then? Now not only do we have to worry about being greedy and how we'll have enough stuff to live on, if I don't have enough faith – or at least so that it is more than "little" – does God still love me...? Am I still saved?

YES..... of course you are. Because *life does not consist of possessions*, not even an accumulation of a LOT of faith – whatever that is. Jesus is spending this whole time reassuring those around him..., reassuring you..., that God provides the crop..., God takes care of the creation..., and God will provide for you – not in sitting back to eat, drink, and be merry while God does all the work..... But that together we strive with God for the kingdom.

YES..... of course you are God's person. You of little faith – it's like St. Paul talks about in Romans 5, "*God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.*" God didn't wait for you or anyone to believe or have faith....., God in Christ just up and died for you – God died for you before you were even a twinkle in your daddy's eye.

God in Christ died for people:

who didn't believe in him,  
who didn't know him,  
who hadn't been to church,

for people who didn't know what the Bible was,  
for people who were greedy....., fearful....., worry-warts....., and grieving.

And even for people who thought they were perfect and full of faith, but who would sin again and again and would be in constant need of forgiveness just like the rest of us.

And Jesus lives to let all people know that he loves them..... So honestly, where is your treasure? Is your treasure in your possessions? Is it in heaven with the God who loves you?

*"Have no fear little flock, it is the Father's GOOD PLEASURE to GIVE you the kingdom."*

Little flock..... of little faith..... Do not be afraid..... Your God is generous, loving, and gracious. And calls you to life in him.....//

What does your life consist of?

What does your generosity and striving look like?

A few voices to speak to us today....

[Bishop Haugen's grandpa]:.... my first bishop told the story of being in church as a child in the 50s sitting next to his grandpa who when the offering plate came by placed 3 crisp \$10

bills in the plate (that's like \$300) today. When grandpa saw Phil watching closely, he said, "We give three times, once for ourselves, once for those who cannot give, and once for those who won't."

Pope Francis tweeted this week, "If the Lord has gifted you with riches, it is in order to do lots of good things for others in His name."

*Longbourn*, by Jo Baker = On seeing the great estate Pemberley for the first time, Sarah, the maid thinks: how did it all start, property and wealth and beauty like that? Who staked out a fence, strung out lines and said, This is my land and nobody else's; these fields are mine, these woods are mine; this water, reflecting the white moon, is mine; and all the fish that swim in the water are mine; and all the birds that fly and roost in the woods are mine; and the very air is mine while it moves over my land; and all of this will be mine, and after I am gone, it will be my son's; and it will never leave our hands, not while there are still sons left to inherit it. Because there was, there *must* have been a time before, when the fish swam and the fowl flew and were not anybody's at all, and the world was young, when Adam and Eve staggered out of Eden all baffled and ashamed. P.307

What if all of us were striving for God's kingdom..., giving to it...., serving it...., striving for it...., living to love, to give, to serve our gracious God?  
Amen.....