

Eighteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time-C

Lk 12:13-21

Dear Friends,

In today's Gospel, Jesus responds to the request to intervene in the family dispute by telling a story. The message is clear and direct. Do not be a fool.

Hebrew Scriptures have a clear understanding of what constitutes a fool. This is a person who has denied or forgotten God. In this story, the neglect of God is manifested in the greedy farmer with the very productive land. He was rich because he had many crops. He was a fool because he thought he was secure: **"You have so many good things stored up for many years, rest, eat, drink and be merry" (Lk 12:19)**. He failed to realize U-Hauls are useless in cemeteries.

The owner is clearly a person who is self-absorbed. The idea of sharing never entered into his planning. He placed his bet down on his crop. Material possessions were his gateway to happiness. He became a fool simply by not being real. Life is a passing venture. In spite of all the guarantees of the advertising world, there is no lasting happiness as long as the funeral directors continue to have a lucrative business. The choice is between things and God. The fool chooses things.

Jesus is pointing out that nothing is more destructive in life than concern about acquiring and holding onto wealth. The irony is that the wealth most often leads to feeling more insecurity.

In choosing God, we do not drop out of life. We continue to use things and possessions. In fact, we would be irresponsible if we did not. Jesus' message for us today is to clear up our priorities. We need to avoid the blinding and crippling power of greed. The constant need for more is not the gateway to security. Sufficient has to be the governing principle in dealing with our possessions if we are going to allow our wealth and belongings lead us to God.

Chase or Bank of America or whatever bank have to be a means to an end. Jesus clearly shows us that we cannot store up our treasures in the banks or barns of this world but only in heaven. Greed and avarice always restrain and restrict the heart. We need to free the heart so our wealth, no matter how small or grand, is a stepping stone into the Kingdom. All things either free us or constrict us when we decide to walk with Jesus.

All of Jesus' teachings are a guide to free the heart from all that is not God. Left to its own, the heart is an idol-making machine. Jesus tells us to trust in God's providence for our security. This loving presence will be the only sure ticket on the final, inevitable passage through death which is the most non-negotiable part of life. We should fill our barns with the only true and lasting grain of this life: trust, service, compassion, humility and love. **"Then he said to the crowd, take care to guard against all greed, for though one may be rich, one's life does not consist of possessions" (Lk 12:15).**