

¹³Someone from the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”

¹⁴“Friend,”^[a] he said to him, “who appointed me a judge or arbitrator over you?” ¹⁵He then told them, “Watch out and be on guard against all greed, because one’s life is not in the abundance of his possessions.”

¹⁶Then he told them a parable: “A rich man’s land was very productive. ¹⁷He thought to himself, ‘What should I do, since I don’t have anywhere to store my crops?’ ¹⁸I will do this,’ he said. ‘I’ll tear down my barns and build bigger ones and store all my grain and my goods there. ¹⁹Then I’ll say to myself, ‘You have many goods stored up for many years. Take it easy; eat, drink, and enjoy yourself.’”

²⁰“But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life is demanded of you. And the things you have prepared—whose will they be?’

²¹“That’s how it is with the one who stores up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”

If there is one thing that I don’t think needs to be said it would be Solomon’s words, “*Eat, drink, and enjoy one’s work.*” I’ve never had to be told to eat or drink. I’m pretty good at eating, drinking, and enjoying life. You’d think that someone so wise would instead insist that we don’t enjoy life so much. Yet this phrase, “Eat, drink, and be merry,” occurs many times in the Bible. The idea of enjoying life carries with it the thought of expanding your diaphragm. You fill your lungs and look out on life with a feeling of accomplishment. It’s finished. I can relax and enjoy life. Maybe you’ve had the feeling any number of times. School was out and teachers breathed a sigh of relief. School started and parents breathed a sigh of relief. Students graduate and fill their diaphragm, they find a job, and even retire and breathe deeply “It’s finished.” Eat, drink, and enjoy life.

But in our Gospel a young man is trying to enjoy life but some injustice has prevented him. He comes to Jesus with a demand, “*Tell my brother to divide the inheritance.*” And Jesus responds, “*Man, who made me judge or arbitrator among you?*” Jesus calls him, “*Man,*” not “*friend.*” Jesus responds harshly and then tells a parable where he refers to the man as a fool. Jesus speaks the parable of the American dream. This guy doesn’t cheat, steal, deal drugs, or gain his wealth by dishonest dealing. Instead he works hard and reaps the fruit of his labor. He hasn’t just done well, he’s done miraculously well like Joseph in Egypt storing up a harvest for the years to come. He builds bigger barns taking responsibility for his harvests, preparing for years of famine, and even protecting the community. Just as he reaches retirement, just as he plans to eat, drink, and enjoy the labor of his work, Robin Hood swoops in redistributes his wealth while taunting him, “*You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?*” Ouch.

So the moral of the story is, “Eat, Drink, and enjoy life because God is going to get you if you don’t?” How can he enjoy life if God stands against him? There are a number of things they can do. They can ignore God. They can value their possessions above God. They can find other gods in their possessions, a god they can go to find comfort and security. After all both of these men think that everything they have in life is something they’ve earned and they own. Each one of them seems to be the self-made man. But that young man didn’t earn an inheritance, nor did the rich man do anything. Jesus emphasized that it was the land which produced a harvest. They both miss the big picture of a loving God who richly provides all we need for body and life.

The young man has no interest in reconciling his relationship with his brother nor does it occur to this rich man that he could give the abundance away. Augustine writes, “*He did not realize that the bellies of the poor were much safer storerooms than his barns.*” They think of anyone but themselves. Their sole focus and center of life were their things, an inheritance or a harvest.

Just look at the pronouns. “*What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops, my barn, my goods, my soul, - I will say to myself.*” It’s a pathetic situation. He doesn’t talk to anyone about his plans. This doesn’t strike us as out of place

because we keep to ourselves more than those in the Ancient Near East. We seek time away from people. But Kenneth Bailey writes, "*In the Middle East people make decisions about important topics after long discussions with their friends, family, and community.*" Everybody's business is everybody's business. Yet here is one who has no friends. He has to plan for himself. He has to converse with himself. He has to congratulate himself. While he thought that he could, "Eat, drink, and enjoy life" he never thought that it was because tomorrow he may die. He expected life.

So eat, drink, and enjoy life, or else because God will get you if you don't? Don't build bigger barns? No, of course not. God's not saying that we can't have nice things, let alone enjoy them. The book of Proverbs encourages the wise to "*store up choice food and olive oil, but a fool gulps theirs down*" – Proverbs 21:20. We find wisdom stores up an inheritance for one's children's children. But we too can fall into the same trap as these men by forgetting what is most important in life.

All of us rich or poor may forget. This happens as we connect our worth, our importance, our source of life, our security, our happiness to what we possess. This happens when we make things and the acquisition of things more important than God. This thought is prevalent in our society where image is everything. It's prevalent when we idolize those who are successful. For some reason or another people value the opinion of an actor. An actor will come on TV and give his political opinion or host a conference on how you too can be successful. Never mind the fact that many of these people inherited their wealth. The only thing they have going for them is they won the genetic lottery. But it doesn't just happen in the world this also happens in the church where some equate spirituality with prosperity. Then those with wealth think they should have a greater vote. But God calls to each of us, "Be on guard against all kinds of greed."

Guard against the temptation to measure a person by their life and what they have be it, a reputation, a standing in society, or a spirituality. When we base our lives on such an insecure foundation of wanting more and trying to gather more we may, we forget that God gave us life and he could call it back at any time. We forget that life does not consist of possessions. Even those who are rich realize life is not about what you have. The results of being rich toward this world and not toward God is death. Last week we looked at using worldly wealth to win friends for eternity. Here we are encouraged to eat, drink, and enjoy life.

We can eat, drink, and enjoy the life God has given us.

Solomon realized that nothing in this life can bring true joy. He had all that life could offer: money, women, the most toys. Solomon had been there and seen everything that this world had to offer and as he looks back at his life he writes, "*meaningless, meaningless, everything is meaningless.*". All of his hard work will eventually be given to another but Solomon doesn't give up in a heap of despair rather he says, "Eat, drink, enjoy the life that God has given you."

God has given us life. God hasn't killed you or me for our greed and selfishness. Instead of killing me and demanding my life from me – he stepped in my place. Thank God that Jesus did not have the same attitude as this young man or this rich fool. Jesus didn't seek his comfort and retire from the church but he lived selflessly, looking out for others, and even making the ultimate sacrifice for them. If that is the God who you live for and you do, Paul argues, "*God who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, will he not with him graciously give us everything else?*" – Romans 8:32. *Seek first his kingdom and these things will be given to you as well.* – Luke 12:31.

You can, "eat, drink, and expand your diaphragm," because it is finished. He's forgiven us for all the times we've had our priorities mixed up. He forgives us for being so busy that we end up making a life in this world without him. When we consider all these things and the life that God gives we quickly see that we are blessed beyond belief. We may not have the finest car, the best house and health that money can buy but we have the greatest asset through his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. We are rich toward God moreover he is rich toward us.

We've been made members of his kingdom through baptism. God makes a pledge to us. You are forgiven. We can follow in his footsteps as his disciples by showing love to others. God is the giver of our gifts and he can give us more. God gives us the opportunity to be generous with others. Knowing that God is on your side allows us to fill our lungs and breathe a sigh of relief. It is finished. Our salvation is secure.

Luke 12:13-21

8th Sunday after Pentecost

July 31, 2022

That doesn't mean it will be easy or enjoyable. Life can be painful and problematic. It can be a struggle to keep carrying on. It's difficult to see through this world to the life that God has given us. Don't look search for life anywhere else. There will always be something else in life calling for your attention, telling you that this will bring you peace. It won't. Just as the teachers fill their diaphragm and breathe a sigh of relief but summer break doesn't last long, school gets out, children graduate, people retire but the peace they bring is not permanent. Instead...

Find life in God. And realize that your life is a gift from God and he continues to give good gifts. You can eat, drink, and enjoy life. You can take and eat his body given for you. You can take and drink his blood poured out for you. You can enjoy the life he has purchased and won for you. And you can be reminded of the life he has given you not only this life but our permanent place in heaven. Amen.