

Pastor Mollie's Sermon
August 4, 2019
Luke 12:13-21- Foolish Man Parable

Last week, after church, our family was home having a quiet relaxing afternoon
It had started to rain, and we knew the forecast was calling for some pretty decent storms.
After a while, Dave and I heard the tornado sirens going off...
We had moved from a tornado warning to a watch.
For best practices, we decided it would be best to head to the basement.
We told the boys we were going to have some rest time in the basement for a while, just to be safe.
Well of course, as 6 year olds do, they started to worry, started to panic.
Once we got downstairs, and settled you could almost see the gears working hard in their heads
One after another the questions began....
"What about our beds?"
"What about our toys?"
"What about our water guns outside"
"The tornado will take them all away and we will have nothing left!"
That is just stuff boys.... We can always buy new toys, beds, water guns....
But MOOOOMM- I got so many good toys for our birthday!
Yes, I know, but.... Those are just things.
We can't buy another nolan, henry, graham, dad, mom, and puppers.
It's more important to keep us safe- the rest is all replaceable.
I am not going to lie, I was thinking about a few things myself... my purse, photos, jewelry, all things important to me because of the memories tied with them.
More and more our lives are defined by "stuff" ...
getting stuff, keeping stuff, always wanting more and better stuff.
Whether it's a bigger flat screen or a smarter smartphone, there is always more stuff out there that if we only had it,
we'd finally be happy.
Meanwhile, attics, basements, and garage sales overflow with last year's gotta-have-it stuff.
Whether it's wired into our DNA or it's an acquired trait,
we all love stuff.
But how can loving our stuff affect us and our priorities?
That's the lesson of this week's gospel.
Bigger barns to store his bumper crops, that's all the farmer thinks he needs and his life will be a dream.
But Jesus does not hold back and calls this man a fool!
But why?
One could easily argue that the rich man is a wise and responsible person.
He has a thriving farming business.
His land has produced so abundantly that he does not have enough storage space in his barns.
So he plans to pull down his barns and build bigger ones to store all his grain and goods.
Then he will have ample savings set aside for the future and will be all set to enjoy his golden years.
Isn't this what we are encouraged to strive for?

Isn't it wise and responsible to save for the future?

The rich farmer would probably be a good financial advisor.

He seems to have things figured out.

He has worked hard and saved wisely.

Now he can sit back, relax, and enjoy the fruits of his labor, right?

Not exactly. 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?"

The rich farmer is a fool not because he is wealthy or because he saves for the future, but because he appears to live only for himself,

and because he believes that he can secure his life with his abundant possessions.

When the rich man talks in this parable, he talks only to himself, and the only person he refers to is himself:

"What should *I* do, for *I* have no place to store my crops?"

"*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.

The rich man's land has produced abundantly, yet he expresses no sense of gratitude to God or to the workers who have helped him plant and harvest.

He has more grain and goods in storage than he could ever hope to use,

yet seems to have no thought of sharing it with others, and no thought of what God might require of him.

He is blind to the fact that his life is not his own to secure.

The rich man learns the hard way quite simply, that you can't take it with you.

All that we work so hard for in life will end up in someone else's hands, and as Ecclesiastes puts it, "*Who knows whether they will be wise or foolish?*

Yet they will be master of all for which I toiled and used my wisdom under the sun. This also is vanity"

Vanity. Emptiness. This feeling that washes over all of us who are enticed by materialism.

Our reality is that no matter how much we have, we are always aware of things we don't have.

We are bombarded by marketing wizards whose job it is to convince us of all the products we need to complete our lives.

And so we never quite feel that we have enough.

Like the rich farmer, we are tempted to think that having large amounts of money and possessions stored up will make us secure.

Sooner or later, however, we learn that no amount of wealth or property can secure our lives.

No amount of wealth can protect us from a genetically inherited disease, for instance, or from a tragic accident.

No amount of wealth can keep our relationships healthy and our families from falling apart. In fact, wealth and property can easily drive a wedge between family members.

Most importantly, no amount of wealth can secure our lives with God.

In fact, Jesus repeatedly warns that wealth can get in the way of our relationship with God.

"Take care!" he says. "Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions".

It is not that God doesn't want us to save for retirement or future needs.

It is not that God doesn't want us to "eat, drink, and be merry" and enjoy what God has given us.

We know from the Gospels that Jesus spent time eating and drinking with people and enjoying life.

But he was also clear about where his true security lay.
It is all about priorities.
It is about who is truly God in our lives.
It is about how we invest our lives and the gifts that God has given us.
It is about how our lives are fundamentally aligned:
toward ourselves and our passing desires,
or toward God and our neighbor, toward God's mission to bless and redeem the world.
A seasoned pastor once said,
"I have heard many different regrets expressed by people nearing the end of life,
but there is one regret I have never heard expressed.
I have never heard anyone say, 'I wish I hadn't given so much away.
I wish I had kept more for myself.'"
Death can have a way of clarifying what really matters.
Our lives and possessions are not our own.
They belong to God.
We are merely stewards of them for the time God has given us on this earth.
We rebel against this truth because we want to be in charge of our lives and our stuff.
Yet this truth is actually good news.
Because all that we are and all that we have belongs to God,
Which means our future is secure beyond all measure.
A final story...
IN my first call, I was in a confirmation interview with a kid, the talk you have with the pastor
before your confirmation service.
He was an incredible swimmer- like training for the Olympics kind of incredible.
When I asked him what being an adult member of the church will look like for him,
He was hesitant, because of how busy his schedule was always going to be with swimming.
He had parents that were very serious in supporting this swimming career he was headed toward,
and although he was grateful for that support he also knew he wanted to be involved at church
too.
As I listened to him wrestle through this conundrum, he finally took a deep breath,
Looked me straight in the eye and said...
" I just know that when I am 80 years old ...i'm not gonna need the pool... Im going to need my
God!"
Amen