



Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. **AMEN**

In our Gospel text for this morning, there are actually two stories or parts to this teaching by Jesus. They both have a warning from Jesus attached to them. The first warning is inspired by a squabble over inheritance, a civil dispute. Someone asks Jesus to help him see to it that the family fortune is divided correctly. Jesus is not a judge or an arbitrator but instead warns "Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions." WOW. We should be careful and guard against all kinds of greed. Life is not about piling up possessions.

Our second story comes in the form of a parable, the parable of the rich man. Jesus says that a rich man had a very prosperous year in farming. There were more crops harvested than he could hold in his barns. And so, he wants to tear down his current barns and build bigger ones. He then can just sit back, as he will be set for the next several years and can relax, eat, and drink and be merry. Wrong! The man dies that night. What will become of his high yield, his treasure? Whose will it be? The warning here from Jesus is that "those who store up treasures for themselves are not rich towards God." In other words, hoarding your stuff will not score you any points with God and you cannot take it with you! All the stuff in the world will not give you one more day on earth.

Well, if that doesn't go against what keeps our society humming. Our society today screams at us to buy, buy, and buy more, more, more. The push on now is to buy all the things your child needs to go back to good. School shopping is huge for the retail giants of our world. And it won't be long after that we see Halloween decorations lining the shelves. I found Brach's candy corn at Dollar General this week. Yum! And then the biggest season of the year in retail is Christmas which follows directly after Halloween. I heard that Christmas shopping constitutes more than half of all retail sales for the year. Don't get me wrong,

shopping is OK when it is stuff that we need and will use. But to buy just to have more stuff is dangerous.

As we age, I do think that some of us are trying to get rid of some of the stuff that we have collected. Maybe we are getting wiser and changing our priorities. I do see the need for “stuff” is not as great in my own children in their thirties. They are not interested in the stuff of their past that I have kept all these years. I’m going to fool them and let them throw it all away when I die?

Yet just look around at how many storage units there are, and more being built every day. Bigger barns for more stuff. People have more and more stuff today. People collect stuff for several reasons: To have more than their neighbor, to show off how much they can accumulate, because you don’t want to be one of those people, to show how smart you are, to show people how hard you work, to prove your honesty and to find happiness. Folks these are all myths about having the stuff money can buy. None of these reasons or things can make life abundant. In fact, as it were, stuff can and does just get in the way of true life. It is difficult to keep up with the Jones’ and to find places to store all your stuff. Not to mention the fact that we can even lose track of what we have and what we don’t have. Guess that is a feature of aging!

Just having stuff to satisfy these misnomers of wealth certainly can be a burden. Our text for today asks us to guard against greed. In the King James Bible, the word is translated as covetousness. Some other versions use the word avarice, which means an insatiable greed for riches, inordinate miserly desire to gain and hoard wealth. No matter what word you use, Jesus here is warning us not to use our wealth to obtain and possess things.

Our God wants us to enjoy a full, complete, and balanced life and He has made provision through His Word for us to be fulfilled in that way. God promises us that He will supply our every need. God promises us that He will fulfill the desires of our hearts as well. God wants us to seek the kingdom of God first, keeping our priorities straight.

Greed, avarice, or whatever you want to call it, is a sin our culture encourages. The subliminal messages of our capitalistic society are based on the hope that we want to get more, buy more and have more. We are a consumer nation. How many times have you seen someone wearing a T-shirt that reads “Born to Shop”? I know that Park Falls is not really conducive to good shopping. How many of our younger families take a weekend in August and go to do “School shopping” in Wausau or the Mall of American. Or how about those three-day trips in December we enjoy doing “Christmas Shopping”. So much stuff to choose from. The entire ambiance is cleverly arranged to invite you to buy, to acquire, whether you need it all or not.

Two weeks ago, was Amazon prime day. How many of you were online looking at the deals? And did you ever think about the fact that the milk is always in the back of the store, so when you run in to get just a gallon, you have to by-pass the snack and cookie isle. Or how about the stores being beautifully decorated so you long for your own Christmas tree to look like the one on display. All this and more retailing strategies are to get you to buy

things you don't really need. They make it difficult for us to buy just our needs because their goal is to have us satisfy our wants.

Ah, but when we get that item home that looked so good in the store, it does not look so sharp in our homes. The thrill of the display room is gone. And only the credit card bill remains. We easily get distracted from what we need to buy. And once that ball gets rolling it is hard to stop. Kind of like itching your poison ivy rash. The more you scratch it the more it itches. Buying more and more can be a never-ending cycle. And folks having a higher income or greater 401K, or bigger social security check does not guarantee that you will be able to scratch your itch to acquire more stuff. The more we have the greedier we seem to get.

And what does all this do for us. Gives us worry and angst. It does distract us from the things that are most important, relationships. Relationship with God, with our environment and with our family are way more important. God is saddened when we are not grateful for what we have and see it as a blessing from Him. Do we really need two backpacks, designer jeans, a home filled with scary decorations or a newly decorated Christmas tree? So how can we fend off temptation to acquire more and more stuff? How do we judge the difference between need and want? When do we have to tear down our barns to build bigger ones to house all our acquisitions?

Our parable of the rich fool not only gives the answer but puts it in very easy terms. Death brings an end to all our stuff and the struggle to acquire and keep track of it. We all know that we cannot take it with us. Our effort to collect stuff is meaningless, yet we miss out on an abundant life, the life God wants for each one of us when we let greed overtake us. We need to stop storing up treasures for their own sake and start being rich toward God. We need to see things as God wants us to see them. God wants us to recognize his generosity. God wants us to be a family of his children where we all love and care for one another. He wants us to build relationships not only with Him but with our neighbors, so our lives can be enriched.

Last week at Bible study we talked about how God us gave dominion or responsibility over the planet, over the plants, and animals on earth. We are to care for his creation and all its creatures. And not just care for, but find the awe and wonder in this amazing place God has given us to live in. So, I think we are to appreciate the beautiful kingdom God has given us to enjoy instead of storing away possessions that give us a false sense of satisfaction. And just imagine what heaven will be like since God gave us this amazing creation to live in here on earth temporarily. I dream that earth pales in comparison to our heavenly home.

So, I urge you to not let greed or avarice detract from the wonderful life God has planned for you. Don't build bigger barns but rather pray and worship God. Read Scripture, His word. Come to receive the sacrament and continue to be of service and witness to your neighbor. All these things will help free us from the greed the world tells us to seek. Greed is not only wrong but also irrelevant because God has already given us more than we need. His grace is sufficient for all. His gifts of forgiveness and abundant life and the promise of

eternal life need no “stuff”. They are paid for by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. So, what more could we need? **AMEN**