**8/3/25**

**What’s Your Worth?**

**Vicar Vince Piekarski**

**Luke 12:13-21 (NRSVUE)**

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Corinthians 1:2, NRSVUE) (2) **Amen.**

Wow! I am really excited about how this week’s readings really managed to line up. For one reason or another, they just clicked together and really got to me. Now, that could be because I am just coming at them fresh following a few days off and some vacation time in Pittsburgh, or perhaps it is due to all the time in my seminary classes and all the reading that I have been doing. Regardless, I am pretty sure that if you read ahead when the email came out this week on Thursday, or if you read your bulletin when you sat down in your pew to prepare yourself for service, or if you just listened along this morning, you might have come to realize that you were pretty familiar with the readings and their aim as well. You may have even realized that they lined up particularly well too. I will admit that does not always seem to happen in our Lectionary selections, but today just seemed to be different for some reason. So, let’s explore a little more, and I will even be a little vulnerable with you here.

I stand up here as your Vicar and past Church Council President, as your friend and fellow church member, and I admit that I may not have been able to pinpoint precisely where all these readings were in the Bible. You just might be in the same place as well, and you may not have been able to pinpoint them either… and that is okay. Although, some of us just manage to have a knack for memorization and placement, and some of us manage to have a knack for general knowledge and recall. Regardless of what your skill is, we are all gathered together for us to study together and dig more deeply into the scripture put before us. We get the chance to sharpen our mindset together, and be able to reference these stories a few more times in our own lives, that is if we have not done so already intentionally or not. Thank God that we have been given this Living Book, a Living Word that we can read and study together and on our own.

So, in our blended mix of stories our First Reading hits us with the all too popular “vanity of vanities” (2) discussion. Yep, we probably have all made that statement a time or two, and we may have not even chalked it up to actually being a Biblical reference. I will tell you that there is no shame in that, but now we have sharpened our minds and have been given a reminder that it is indeed right here in Ecclesiastes. Our 49th Psalm then offered us up some very straight forward insight as verse 10 says, “For we see that the wise die also; like the dull and stupid they perish and leave their wealth to those who come after them.” (2) Some rather harsh talk there for sure, but I know we all heard it. That harsh language is indeed intentional in the Bible to make sure we are paying attention to an all too important message, and to say there is no distinguishing between the so-called greatest and least of these. We are all equal in the eyes of God. We then pressed on to our Second Reading from Colossians and verse 2 encouraged us to, “Set your minds on the things that are above, not on the things that are on earth” (2) Another little nugget for us to think about as we pushed on to our Gospel Reading which gave us the all too familiar story of the rich man who did not gain his wealth or yield in any illegal or wrongful manner. A rich man in discussion with himself who manages to rationalize his decision to tear down his small barns and build even larger ones to store all the stuff that his fields have yielded, and not to share it or consider other alternatives. He wants to “relax, eat, drink, be merry.” (2) just like verse 19 informs us.

Wow! What a load of stuff just in a few short readings! What a mindset shift that we all need to partake in! This is precisely why Martin Luther often reminded us that the life of a Christian would have us dying to self on a daily basis, and living a life of faith like no other. However, in order to die to one’s self, we would have to remove or better utilize one of the biggest stumbling blocks of all; and that is money, wealth, resources, or better yet suited here; worldly possessions. Now, that is way easier said than done of course, but not if we are truly called to a Stewardship mentality.

Yes, I just segued into what yet again could be another Stewardship talk. I know I threw a “Completely Radical Economy” Sermon at you a few weeks ago when we spoke of the Good Samaritan. Yes, this was encouraged from a Seminary class, and I will admit it was not one of the most comfortable sermons I have ever delivered, but I learned a lot from it, and I hope you did as well. Now, I could lead us along the same trail here this morning. I could lead us right into giving and how we all should not be so silly with our finances to think we will have them forever, or even that the persons after us will do right with them like we have done or have desired to do all of our lives. I could easily talk about how we need to fix more things, and take care of our budget for this year and the time to come as well. However, I would only be falling into the very same predicament and mindset that our rich man in the Gospel Reading fell into today. So, I am not going to tear down small barns to build bigger barns here. I am going to try and continue to build the kingdom of God, and I am going to invite you to have the very same mindset and to do the very same thing as well. The question is, how am I going to do that for you and for I in this sermon here.

Well, let’s press pause here since I have probably managed to scramble your brains a little bit. Let alone the fact that I now have went outside of my conventional way of preaching. Let me thank each and every one of you for showing up today, whether that be physically or virtually. I want you to know that your presence in this very community of faith is so vital to our growth together in love and compassion as we focus on Christ. We can fill the pews and the conference call, and we can take this message out to the world as the small yet mighty church that we often proclaim that we are. There is no denying that we are all here to be spiritually fed and grow, and let us continue to do just that, but let us not keep it to ourselves.

As I was talking before, I was by no means saying that we should not plan for and fund the future. I was not saying that we should not have a rainy-day account, or an account to fix things that break down unexpectedly. Nor was I saying that we should spend all of our money to fix the building or even do things that we do not need to do in the first place. What I was saying was that we need to utilize our blessings in a manner that first and foremost always honors God. However, enough about money. Let’s get into the main course here and see what the real proverbial meat and potatoes of our lesson is.

The trouble in today’s world, and the world over the years has been, and will always be, how we identify our own sense of wealth. Please notice I said our own sense of wealth and not with our own wealth. Let me make that a little more straight forward or easier to grasp here. Let me rephrase that mindset and even put a question behind it that may ring in our heads once we all leave our worship and fellowship time together with one another today. That question being… **What’s Your Worth?** Let me repeat that again… **What’s Your Worth?** Now, let that sink in a little bit. Let yourselves think about it and reflect a little more in your heads as I press on and close out this sermon here today. That question being again… **What’s Your Worth?**

If you did not hear or read verse 20 loud and clear from our Gospel Reading today, then let me offer it to you once again… “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?’” (2) Our lives are extremely precious, and yet they are extremely limited. Our time here on earth is but a few years as compared to what it will be in eternity. We are not running a race to store up all that we can, and we are not running a race to win all the fanciest of prizes and gain all of the best accolades before our time is up. Yes, we indeed want to live out our lives comfortably and not feel as if every day is a struggle, or as if we are just out there living in the all too popular and yet unfortunate rat race. We want to provide for ourselves and even for one another. We want to honor what is to become our legacy. We want to be remembered in some way, shape, or form once we are gone. However, are we thinking inwardly towards self, or outwardly towards God and one another? Are we building a legacy on financial gains and successes, or are we building a legacy on spiritual gains and love? Are we building a legacy of stuff and achievements, or are we building a legacy on the solid rock of Christ Jesus? So again, this is where that question earlier comes right back into the fray of things… **What’s Your Worth?**

It is a mindset and it is a lifestyle for sure! However, it is not one of building larger barns to store more grain or more stuff. It is a mindset and a lifestyle of living one’s life out for and with God. Our worth is identified not by all the stuff of this world, but by precisely what God has created! Our worth is identified with our maker, and the very love and compassion we show towards one another. For in an instant our lives can end here, and it is not what we have, but who we have that matters! If we are not living a life for and because of Christ then we have missed the most single important mark imaginable! Now, that may be a very hard pill to swallow, and we may be sitting there and saying that we already do that, but let me reassure you and myself that we can always do more. We can change and grow toward and with Christ in ways that are unimaginable sometimes. This is precisely where we examine the “vanity of vanities” (2) that occurs in our lives. This is where we die to self, and focus on the things above. Our lives have yielded a lot, and they may still have more to yield or produce. Our Stewardship at times may look like dollars, and at other times it may look exactly like what it is meant to be, an outward expression of love and compassion; a commitment to love and care for one another, our church, our community, and our world. **What’s Your Worth?** may seem like some nifty question I created just to make you think now, and once you leave this space here today. However, I hope it really makes you dig in mentally and physically, spiritually and emotionally. **What’s Your Worth?** is a mindset and a position that we need to stand in firmly and it is a question that we need to be able to answer with conviction at that very moment when we have been called from this life, and we need to be able to proclaim that we are rich towards God!

**Amen****.**

**References & Study Points**

(1) Sundays and Seasons

 Preaching

 Year C 2025

 August 3rd, 2025

 8th Sunday after Pentecost

(2) BibleGateway.com

(3) The Four Pages of The Sermon

 Revised and Updated

 A Guide to Biblical Preaching

 Paul Scott Wilson

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 Abingdon Press

(4) WorkingPreacher.org

 Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

 Jesus invites us to trust, not in what we can build or save, but in the God who sees

 and provides

 August 3, 2025

 Commentary on Luke 12:13-21

 Jennifer S. Wyant

(5) WorkingPreacher.org

 Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

 Many who hear this parable, especially in a North American context, may wonder:

 Why is the rich farmer called a fool?1

 August 4, 2019

 Commentary on Luke 12:13-21

 Elisabeth Johnson

(6) WorkingPreacher.org

 Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

 Secured life does not depend on possessions, but on entrusting one’s life to God

 July 31, 2022

 Commentary on Luke 12:13-21

 Niveen Sarras

(7) WorkingPreacher.org

 Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

 The parable of the rich fool (or “barn guy,” as I always think of him) at the heart of

 this week’s text illustrates simply and memorably the futility of choices made in

 isolation from the love of God and neighbor.

 July 31, 2016

 Commentary on Luke 12:13-21

 Meda Stamper

(8) WorkingPreacher.org

 Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

 Stewardship season, already?

 August 1, 2010

 Commentary on Luke 12:13-21

 David Lose

(9) 7/31/22

 Greed & Its Characters

 Luke 12:13-21

 Vincent Piekarski

(10) Luthermatrix

 The blog of a Lutheran pastor, writer, and political animal.

 Saturday, August 02, 2025

 Vanity O’Vanity!

 Christopher Halverson

**Luke 12:13-21 (NRSVUE)**

In God’s reign, the “rich will be sent away empty.” Jesus uses a parable to warn against identifying the worth of one’s life with the value of one’s possessions rather than one’s relationship with God.

13 Someone in the crowd said to [Jesus,] “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.” 14 But he said to him, “Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?” 15 And he said to them, “Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.” 16 Then he told them a parable: “The land of a rich man produced abundantly. 17 And he thought to himself, ‘What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?’ 18 Then he said, ‘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. 19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.’ 20 But 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?’ 21 So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God.”