

St Pius & St Anthony 18th Sunday Ordinary Time Year C(2025) Luke

That parable we just heard from Jesus may be stuck in our mind: with us wondering, “Do I have stored up **what matters to God**, or just a lot a stuff in life?” And “**What does matter to God?**” But we don’t always hear in our readings what leads to Jesus telling particular parables, or what the situation is that evokes a specific story from Him. But we do today. Jesus was asked to intervene in a sibling inheritance dispute and He declines. It’s not that Jesus doesn’t **want** to get involved, it is that he knows that some things cannot be forced. Greed doesn’t convert into generosity by force. He can’t make the brother love the other. He can invite him to. He can shown him how. He can even love him too. But Jesus doesn’t work by force and coercion. Love can not be made to do right thing. Love is the right thing and it must be freely willed. So Jesus cautions the demanding brother who comes to Him. What is the case? An upset brother comes to Jesus and **demands** Jesus sides with him about an inheritance fight (subtly Jesus is also going to confront this ‘grabiness’ in the man standing in front of him - notice the hardening attitude of the brother who feels slighted, cheated from inheritance - he is bitter and Jesus senses that it is **greed in him too** that is showing out). Because from this man, It is pretty arrogant to DEMAND of Jesus something. Who tells God what to do? This echoes from a couple of weeks ago, Martha’s pushy attitude. Remember when she went all huffy to Jesus, insulting Him and then demanding “Tell my sister to help me.” (Luke 10:40). It’s this attitude that needs help, & needs turning around. And the same with this brother here **demanding** Jesus to MAKE his brother love and share with him. Jesus seems to say that if the offending brother thinks more of the inheritance than he does of the bond with his own last remaining family member (keep in mind that if they are dealing with inheritance settlements, then obviously their last parent has passed too, to make this be an issue-so he only has that brother now as family!), so if that other brother is acting that way, then no amount of ‘telling’ is going to change his heart. And that is what Jesus is after always: **hearts, not inheritances**. Jesus wants us to love and treasure relationships, not the real estate. Does the property mean more to him than keeping good relationship to his brother? This demanding brother makes me think of when I might have made such a demand, going to mom or dad saying, “Make him share his toy with me” or “Make them let me join their game.” That just isn’t going to work. *(in that game, if mom did make them, then I was in for it because they’d let me have it in the game-picked on!)* But, I know this from both sides. That was when I was on the receiving side of ‘demanding’. Here’s an example of this playing out from the giving side: I remember being told by mom once when she intervened, “You tell your brother you’re sorry **and mean it.**” Not going to work—Okay, she could make me say certain words, but no one could make me MEAN it. and Jesus faces the same thing here. Maybe as a legal judge He could

force the transfer of stuff – ‘hand this over-surrender this item’- but that coercion likely devastates the filial love bond between them. Can we make a person share? Make a person be truly generous? Not likely. So as always, Jesus works with what He has: this potential disciple right in front of him. Jesus basically responds, *“Don’t let his greed infect you too-Your brother is obviously selfish, but fighting him on this, is not going to soften his heart toward you in any way. Let go. So, he wants those things. Sorry for him. Those things are not going to comfort him, sitting in a chair beside him as he lays in a hospital bed readying for major surgery. Those things are not going to give his life any meaning, if you, his last living family member, passes on to heaven.”* We all can hear that: not to get swallowed up in materialism and money traps– trying to accumulate stuff to cover over-deny the human heart’s true need – which is deep relationship of love and care with others. As always Jesus works with what is personal and right in front of him: He calls this man to not ‘become what he does not like’ Not to turn himself into the greed that is fighting. Basically, “Do not be that guy.” Rise above and let it go. You can’t make a person love and you cannot make a person truly want to share.

Seeing this brother to brother relationship being tested by consuming greed and selfish possessiveness, reminds me of the old TV peanut butter commercial, where two brothers ask for a snack from their mom. She capitalizes on the potential teaching moment, to give a true lesson in sharing. She sits them down to the kitchen bar and pulls out the loaf bread, a jar of peanut butter and knife with a single plate. She makes the sandwich and asks them to help with the preparation. After the sandwich is made, she offers both of them choices. She hands one of them the knife and tells him to cut it in half. (Of course, the kid’s little brain fires, ‘Cut yourself a big half-have it your way’). He falls for such greed, and then the mother says “Oh, thank you for being generous to your brother” and then she invites the other to take whichever portion he wants. His selfishness backfires and the second brother gets his bigger cut. This is what Jesus is trying to do with this case. He is saying, “Don’t mimic your selfish brother’s greed.” Be bigger hearted, teaching him the greater example of gracious generosity. Show him that there’s another way. Keep the relationship intact, and let the baggage go.

Jesus invites all of us to examine what our priorities are? Do we value stuff over other people? What we have, instead of who we have relationship with? Finances over Family? The number of big accounts instead our number of good friends. Jesus doesn’t want us to build bigger barns around us. He’d say build bigger communities around you, personal networks through sharing. That was one considered option with the man in the parable. His existing barn obviously could still be full for him and the excess harvest (instead of hoard it way in new bigger barn), He could have hosted a community jamboree dinner to share his good fortune with them. Build up neighbors instead of a new barn. But his problem is

that he doesn't think of anyone other than himself. In Luke 12:17-19, in just those three lines we hear the man use nine personal pronouns, "My harvest, my barns, my grain, myself, I do, I will, I can..." Me, Me, Me squared! This guy's undoing is being hung up on himself and his stuff. A lot of possessions can do that – they 'possess'! Us! So, Jesus invites us to examine how we relate to stuff, and to avoid prioritizing it over people. What matters to God – that is what we need to build, not barns but relationships. Invest in our faith and other people, relating to God and to our neighbor!