

Where your treasure is, there your heart shall be.

Luke is such the storyteller, and such a good one.

As these weeks of Ordinal Time continue to unfold, we are offered tale upon tale, metaphor upon metaphor, parable upon parable.

And today's Gospel, from Luke's 12th chapter, (following the First Reading's famous reprimand of Ecclesiastes "Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity!") is no exception.

This story of the farmer who builds ever-larger barns to store his excess has Luke at his story-telling best. Luke's framing not only gives us a good story where Jesus teaches a lesson about what constitutes a truly rich life, but Luke gives us a better picture of whom Jesus is, as well.

Luke places Jesus' telling the story not in a vacuum, but within the context of a conversation with a man who's complaining that his brother isn't sharing the inheritance he's received with him.

The request is not out of line—Jesus is, after all, the poster boy for sharing things. But Jesus sees here an opportunity to re-focus the question the brother is asking him. With compassion (remember, this part of the conversation was in

private, before "he addressed the crowd" with the barn-building farmer story) he tells the brother: "I know you think I'm on your side here, ready to chastise your selfish brother who's hoarding the family treasure. But the truth is I think it's healthier for me to ask you 'Why do you want your brother's money?' 'You're from a wealthy family, you're doing fine. Why is your happiness so tied into having still MORE?' 'I'd ask you not to question why your brother gets to have more than you, but to ask YOURSELF why you are so convinced that YOUR happiness depends on having more. Neither I, nor you, can change your brother. The only thing that you have the power to change is YOU. So, my questioning friend, let me tell you, and these dear lost souls here, a story about a rich farmer and his search for happiness."

The crux of Jesus' story is the no-punches-pulled zinger God addresses to the over-confident and over-stuffed farmer: "There you are, building up storehouses and wasting your life away, you fool! This very night your life will be demanded of you!"

We can imagine the farmer retorting: "But God, if I knew that my life would be ending today, maybe I would have done things differently."

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...And God responding: "That's the point! I'm the only one who knows when that final day of yours is coming---and it's that way for a reason. I want you to live a truly rich and meaningful life every day, not just on the day you know you will die. I know you humans well enough that you love to put things off, thinking there's always going to be another opportunity."

"Sure, you might live differently if you knew you had a terminal disease. You might realize that the people who love you would rather have your time than your money, your presence than your presents. You might understand that you don't have to have more toys than the next guy. That the "you" they love has nothing to do with your portfolio, your talents."

"They could care less about your house, your achievements, your accolades."

"You see, you modern day barn-building high-tech farmer, you—you do have a terminal illness. It's called "Being Human." You all end up dying from it—some sooner, some later. But you all catch it."

"It's the only way I could get y'all to really appreciate just how wonderful every breath is."

Every conversation, Every kiss.”

“So, dear and beloved farmer of mine, live your life aware of its preciousness. Make that apology now, before it’s too late. Bury that hatchet before the opportunity passes. Play silly games with the kids more often. Play silly games with the grownups more often. Tell your wayward son, your derelict dad, your grump-of-the-century husband, that you love him. And show it. Spend time. Spend money. Give it away. Sing more. Dance more. Kiss more.”

“This very night your life may be demanded of you.”

So, this very day, as we come in prayer, we sing of the joy of life, and the challenge of living it to the full.

We open our liturgy by learning the plaintive tune and poignant lyrics of “Where Your Treasure Is”

We gather to the call of the “Table of Plenty,” where our deepest yearnings are fed.

We pray in Psalm 90 that we make use of the time we have been given by the God who is with us “In Every Age.”

As we bring our gifts to the Table, we pray “Only this I want, but to know the Lord.”

As we come to the altar, we pray “You Satisfy the Hungry Heart” and “There Is a Longing.”

And as we take our leave, we ask, and answer,
“How Can I Keep from Singing”

As we take the Word and Song of our experience into the world, may we recognize, in joy, not in fear, the preciousness of the very breath we take. And may that preciousness bring us the confidence that, indeed, we may see every day as the dawning of the night when our life is demanded of us.