



Sermon, July 31, 2022
Michelle Mehan, ELCA Deacon
The parable of the rich dead dude

May the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, o Lord my strength and my redeemer.

Grace and peace to you this day.

Today we hear the story of the rich man who wanted to hoard all of his surplus. He wanted to save it for a rainy day.

Yet, have you ever heard the saying, "You can't take it with you!"

You may laugh or think this picture is funny..... And the reality is that picture makes me sad.

It makes me sad for a few reasons: I think what missed opportunities were left. Opportunities to share resources, to share stories, to share in community. The stuff cannot go with you. Have you ever heard the phrase whoever dies with the most..... Wins. Most toys, most cars, most books, most fabric. I am confused by that because I think what do you win? Certainly not favor with God. You are gone and there is the stuff..... Makes no sense to me. We will explore that more in a bit.

So in the Gospel today we see that this man had enough. He had more than enough. He had so much surplus he didn't know what to do with it.

This is a picture of what an ancient grain holder might have looked like. The man's thought was to tear it down and build bigger and larger grain holder. He was set. He was set for a good long time.

In our capitalistic economic system people would applaud him. Give you a bonus and say great job for your thinking of more is better.

Greed an intense and selfish desire for something, especially wealth, power, or food:

Yet let's explore this a little further through what God tells us.

God sees this as greed and selfishness. Let's go back to when the Israelites were in the desert.

Exodus 16:12, 15-20

¹² 'I have heard the complaining of the Israelites; say to them, "At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread; then you shall know that I am the LORD your God.'"

¹⁵ When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, 'What is it?'^[a] For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, 'It is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat. ¹⁶ This is what the LORD has commanded: "Gather as much of it as each of you needs, an omer to a person according to the number of persons, all providing for those in their own tents.'" ¹⁷ The Israelites did so, some gathering more, some less. ¹⁸ But when they measured it with an omer, those who gathered much had nothing over, and those who gathered little had no shortage; they gathered as much as each of them needed. ¹⁹ And Moses said to them, 'Let no one leave any of it over until morning.' ²⁰ But they did not listen to Moses; some left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and became foul. And Moses was angry with them.

When you hear those words what comes to mind? These words speak to me..... some gathering more, some less. ¹⁸ But when they measured it with an omer, those who gathered much had nothing over, and those who gathered little had no shortage; they gathered as much as each of them needed.

There was enough!

Omer - an ancient Hebrew dry measure, the tenth part of an ephah. A measure of grain.

Where else have we seen this in scripture?

The loaves and fishes, feeding of the five thousand from the Gospel of John

There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?' ¹⁰ Jesus said, 'Make the people sit down.' Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they^[d] sat down, about five thousand in all. ¹¹ Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. ¹² When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, 'Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost.' ¹³ So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets.

Matthew 6:26

²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

Do you hear what God is saying? Do you believe it?

We need see with the eyes of faith.

It is about faith. It is about perspective. Definition of perspective a mental view or prospect the interrelation in which a subject or its parts are mentally viewed point of view. The object or item is what it is. It is how we respond to the situation that shows our perspective. Is it half full or half empty? How we respond is an act that shows our faith.

I am asking you to think how you look at things are you satisfied, full, content and at peace? Or are you anxious, worried and always wanting more, there is never enough.

Some people say no matter what I have, it will never be enough. Some people say I will always have enough. I encourage you to think about what your perspective is. I am not minimizing the realities of life, cost of living and paying bills.

Is the cup half full or half empty? It goes back to perspective.

Approaching things as never enough comes from a scarcity mentality. There is never enough. Unfortunately our culture and society fuels this and add human fear and insecurity and we are a perfect storm to be like the dead rich fool.

Michael Ward in his book *Abundance, Creating a Culture of Generosity* states: The scarcity mindset is unfaith to our God who is creator and still creating in our world today. Often, we don't recognize that what we say and do models a God who is finished with creation and that we live in a world where we don't have enough. This is NOT the God of our creeds nor of our biblical understanding, nor is it the God I encounter in our world day to day.

It is sinful to live in the scarcity mentality. It is sinful to always want more and not be satisfied with what we have.

How do we respond here at Nativity. Generosity is not transactional. It's not like paying dues for a health club or paying for dinner when you go out to eat. Generosity happens when people recognize that what they have is a gift of God and seek to advance the kingdom of God through the sharing of resources. Are we open. Arms open wide, come..... OR are we closed. We only have enough.....

The well does not run dry. It is not pie with only so much to go around. There is always enough and always room to welcome others. I love the image from this quote "When You Have More Than You Need, Build A Longer Table Not A Higher Fence"

In my life I have known plenty and I have known want. I have experienced the generosity of gifts when in need. I have been able to give to others when they were in need. God is the giver of what I have. It is not mine. I am the steward of what I have. I have had kindness and love given to me. I have looked at my checkbook and wondered how I would make it to the end of the month. God is faithful. No matter what the situation I was able to make it and made it with abundantly. God is generous. Do you see God's generosity?

We, Kim, and I have known plenty and we have known want. And we can tell you that we have experienced the generosity of others when in need. We have also shared what we have to those who have been in need. We know that things do not make us happy. Stuff does not bring contentment, peace or joy to our relationship. We have all that we need. It is in living an example of sharing what we have with others that brings us joy. We know what it has been to struggle and are thankful when we can extend that same grace to others as

Have you ever had someone unexpected stop by around dinner time. When we do we add another plate and encourage them to join us. There is always enough. God is a gracious host.

It is how we live our lives both as individuals and as a couple. Our resources are from God.

My cup is neither have empty or half full.

My cup runneth over.....

IF we are living in the Spirit there will always be enough.

IF we are living in the Spirit our hearts are open to share.

IF we are living in the Spirit we are content.

Do you remember the times Jesus rebuked people for being selfish or being fearful?

The time when he turned the tables over in the Synagogue. He was mad because of the exploitation of the people. They travelled to make their sacrifices and could not travel

with their gifts so they bought them at the Synagogue. Yet what they were doing was exploiting the people. Selling the gifts for far more than the market price outside of the synagogue.

How about when the Oil was poured of Jesus. Judas, of all people, protested the lavishness of the gift.

Or the widow who gave one mite whose gift was more generous than the wealthy giver because her heart was sincere.

St Basil shared his thoughts as this:

Excess food is for the stomachs of the hungry

Excess clothes are for the naked

Excess shoes rotting away from disuse are for those who have none.

Excess silver is for the needy.

We have been told, we have been shown and we have lived these examples.

Where your heart is your treasure will be also.

As people of faith people look to us to see how we act and respond. How do we use our gifts? How do we use our resources? How do we honor God with our lives.

We live in a world where we are pushed to get more, you never have enough, me first, think of you, you deserve it, more is better.

We are called to be the light. We are called to be the example. My you trust and know what God is the giver of all that you have. You are the steward of what you have. May you choose wisely how you honor God. May you have a servant heart. May your cup runneth over.

May it be so.

Amen