

Proper 13, Year C, 2010
Old Testament Reading: Ecclesiastes 1:2, 12-14; 2:18-23
Gospel: Luke 12:13-21
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A central theme in all the lessons this morning is the question of what is of true and lasting value. Possessions are important, but certainly they are no guarantee of happiness. If we focus on our wealth and our possessions, at the expense of other more important things, then often happiness flees in the very face of our possessions.

I think that this is what the Old Testament book, Ecclesiastes, speaks about when it suggests that work to gain wealth is vanity, and the accumulation of wealth is simply “a striving after the emptiness of the wind.” Let me quote from Ecclesiastes, “I hated all my toil, seeing that I must leave it to the man who will come after me; and who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool?” Ecclesiastes makes this point, and it is the same point Luke makes in the Gospel, this morning. Our focus, in life, should be on things that really matter and that are lasting; things that bring peace and joy, build harmony and understanding, things that spread justice, mercy and love. This is what St. Paul meant in the today’s Epistle reading, when he said that “if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” We should value kindness and patience and we should forgive one another, as God forgives us. Above all, Paul also said, we should “clothe [ourselves] in love, for when [we] do, [we] let the peace of Christ rule in [our] hearts.”

In today’s gospel, the rich farmer had choices he did not pick, choices that were better and would have brought peace for his soul. The parable tells us that this farmer had more than he could possibly need. Parables are always loaded with symbols. In this parable, the bumper crop represents God’s love, always abundant, never exhausted and always a gift of God. It is given freely, regardless of our merit, simply because it pleases God to do good things for us. So when we experience God’s love, we should never hoard it. The best possible use is to give it away, doing what we can to bring the experience of Christian love to others. We are called to be disciples, to bring the good news of God’s love through Jesus Christ to those who have not experienced him and to share the joy of Jesus with our brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ. If we try to keep God’s love to ourselves, the first thing we will find is that we have lost it.

This is the point of all the lessons today. The point is especially powerful in the closing words of the Gospel. “Fool! This night your soul is required of you; and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?” So is he who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.” *Amen.*