

Ecclesiastes 1:2, 12-14; 2:18-23

Psalms 49:1-12

Colossians 3:1-11

Luke 12:13-21

## **Sermon August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019**

### *God Wants to Be the Center of Our Lives*

In our gospel this morning, Jesus encounters a person who wants Jesus to act as an arbitrator between him and his brother over a family inheritance dispute. Instead of taking the job offer, Jesus uses this moment as an opportunity to teach us about what happens when money becomes the center of our lives.

In this person's case the dispute over inheritance is dividing their family. The person and his brother's focus are centered on the land/money they could inherit that may make their life easier or more comfortable. Or maybe they believe that without this inheritance they will not survive. Either way, the money/land becomes more important for them than the health of their relationship.

I saw an example of this in seminary when I was living in a basement suite at this older couple's house. The man was a seventy-year-old farmer. One day we talked about the farm, and he said he hadn't spoken to his brother since his Father died. They got in this huge dispute over the inheritance and were never able to patch things up. They both felt they needed the land/money to survive.

Sadly, I have come across way too many stories where I have seen or heard about a dispute over money end up leading to a broken relationship. In fact, stats show that the number 1 reason couples break up is over disagreements around finances.

For most of us here we spend a good chunk of our lives living bill to bill trying to fulfill all those financial commitments we face. Living with this constant fear and anxiety of whether we will have enough to live. It is quite easy for us to fall in the same trap and put money at the center of our lives, because we feel without it we will not be able to survive or provide. Or we feel that with it we can live a little more comfortably.

We dedicate a lot of our time and energy towards making money so that we can afford a nice house. A car that runs decently. Vacations. Entertainment. Skip the dishes orders when it is just too hot to cook. Savings for education, possessions, retirement, and just a sense of security. Food. Clothing. Medical bills. Insurance. Maintenance.

I have met people who are working two or three or four jobs or taking a lot of overtime just to keep up. Others who take on massive debts just to keep up. The questions we need to ask ourselves are: what are we giving up when we spend all this time and energy on making money? And is it worth it?

Jesus goes on to share a parable about this wealthy person who feels the best thing he can do with the abundance he has is to build even bigger storage bins and store it all away. With the hopes of living a life free of all the fear and anxiety that come with relying too much on money to save oneself. Unfortunately, he dies before getting a chance to really embrace this easy life. And without investing time and energy into building and growing relationships in his life, which means his grain goes to waste.

Banking on money to offer us salvation and meaning doesn't work all that well. In all my years I have rarely come across a person who is truly comfortable with what they have financially. Usually they are always wanting more. Needing more. Pushing themselves harder to afford more.

So, in response to our vulnerability to greed. In response to our fear and anxiety over not having enough. Jesus reassures us that God is the one who gives us life. God is the one who will take care of us. Jesus invites us to put our trust in God so we don't need to worry so much about money. God will provide.

When we feel reassured in God's promise, Jesus challenges us to share in what God gives us. It is hard to share anything when we are living in constant fear and anxiety of not having enough. But, if we let go of this fear and anxiety and trust that God will give us more than enough to live. Then we are freed to show this same generosity to others. To put relationships first. Because what truly brings meaning to our lives isn't what we possess, but who we get to share our lives with. Our stories with. Our gifts with.

Before I left the last church I worked in, there was this parishioner that I became really close with. Before I met him, he had not talked to his brother in a very long time. Unfortunately, his brother accused him of taking money from the farming business, because his brother wanted more than his share. They had a huge blow out over it, and ended up selling the farm and splitting the costs. I was certain on how hurt my friend was that this relationship was all but lost.

Well, about six weeks before I left to come here his brother called him up and reconciled. He apologized for falsely accusing him, and they made up for lost time. It was a beautiful story where two people who let money get in between them overcame this and saw the deeper value of being in a healthy relationship with each other.

Sadly, my friend died of a massive heart attack three weeks after he reconciled with his brother. But, I believe he died more peacefully, and his brother can live on knowing that he listened to God's voice, and not the voice of greed. He chose relationship over possession. He chose heavenly things over earthly things. As Paul encourages us to do in his letter to the Colossians.

Over the years I have found myself at times motivated by money instead of listening to God's voice. In the church at times we have been motivated by money when making decisions around ministry instead of listening to God's voice. Unfortunately, we too have seen the costs that come when money takes center stage in our lives.

But, God continues to reach out to us inviting us to grab God's hand and to trust that God will provide. God invites us to depend on God. To let go of all that fear and anxiety that paralyzes us from living out the gospel. To be generous to others, because the best way to let go of the power of money in our lives is to use it for good. Is to let it go.

Because, God wants to be the center of our lives. God wants to give us meaning, salvation. When we find ourselves living with God at the center, and I believe we all have moments where we do. Then the fear and anxiety go away, and our hearts are stirred towards our neighbor. Relationships become what we desire instead of all the possessions we have.

Let us pray, gracious God thank you for wanting to be the center of our lives. Calm our hearts from the fear and anxiety of not having enough. Encourage us to trust in you to provide. And open our arms to reach out to others with generous hearts. In Jesus name we pray, **Amen**.