

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

In our Gospel today we have a parable before us from the section of Luke's Gospel known as the travel narrative. Within the ten chapters that contain this narrative, Luke emphasizes not just the journey to Jesus' definitive destination on the cross, but it also emphasizes a theological intentionality through the disciples' learning and the ultimate expansion of God's Kingdom. Looking closely then at this particular parable before us this morning, we ask ourselves, what is the theological intent, or the Good News of this parable and how does that intention of the Good News expand the Kingdom of God within the context of our culture today?

Looking at this parable today, we see that it portrays a "rich fool" who by our modern standards may not be foolish at all and may well be in many ways exemplary. In our context today, we may see him as exemplary in that, he is a person who works, plans, saves, and seeks to protect NOT just his belongings, but also his future. He is working to make his future as secure as possible...leaving me to ask, what has this landowner done that can be considered foolish or wrong? In my mind he hasn't done anything wrong that any of us sitting here today haven't done...we all have worked hard in order to have ample "goods" laid up for ourselves in the years ahead. We as a church body, plan, plot, and maneuver our finances for the years ahead as well...it's called being good stewards. So, what is this landowner doing wrong and why is he being called a fool?

A few Sundays ago, I mentioned the philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer who said, we love to buy books because we believe we are buying the time to read them. And just like the books that we think will buy us time to read them, conceivably the nest-eggs we store up for the proverbial "rainy-day" never really get used for that rainy-day because we continue to fiercely protect it from being used at all because we claim that it's not really a "rainy-day" or that something worse will come along. And in the end, we too end up with the mindset of the preacher in Ecclesiastes:

^{2:18} I hated all my toil in which I had toiled under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to those who come after me ¹⁹ -- and who knows whether they will be wise or foolish? Yet they will be master of all for which I toiled and used my wisdom under the sun.

(Ecc 2:18-19)

Nonetheless, as young adults it seems that we set our goals early in our lives that will allow us to "store up" for our future. We strive to accomplish our goals centered in our self-awareness and our restricted personal context...but when the goals are reached, new ones are set and they are set even higher leading us to believe that our future will be even brighter. If goals are not reached, we feel as though we have failed. The fruits of our goals, our works, and our accomplishments are what we store up for our future just like the rich fool in the parable. But I don't believe this to be the reason Jesus is referring to him as a fool.

Using this man in this parable, Jesus shows us that the rich fool never sees past himself and he never sees past his world. There is no other parable that Jesus teaches us that is so full of the words, I, me, my, and mine. In this brief parable we have thirteen references to self. Thirteen times this rich fool mentions self. He is storing things for himself and seeing just himself and in turn cannot see past his world. Likewise, he sees only the future and NOT right now. His goals, his works, and his accomplishments are made on the basis of his world and in turn gain him nothing

when looking beyond *his* world.

We hear Jesus saying this morning, "...for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions,"(Luke 12:15). For me the parable this morning falsely invites us to interpret it in a legalistic sense about planning and focusing our future with God so that we can make *ourselves* rich toward God. But I don't believe the intention of this parable is about storing up "MY" faith in order to make myself rich toward God, so that "I" may enter into the Kingdom of God so that I may relax, eat, drink, and be merry.

With the landowner in the parable is talking to himself, it seems as if Jesus is showing us how our human nature focuses on itself, limits and isolates ourselves, and our perspectives that are turned in on the self. We all want to be comfortable in our future but what are we doing right now, today out there in the world? Are we hiding our faith and squirreling away that grace given through that faith with the intention that it will make "ME" rich toward God in the future?

We seem to want to view this parable through the lens of a 401K retirement plan. But our salvation is not a retirement plan and has nothing to do with the theological intent, or the Good News of this parable or the expansion of the Kingdom of God within the context of our culture today. The abundance from God that we are given today is the very gift of faith that allows us all to understand and to know the grace given to us all through the definitive destination of Jesus Christ on the cross...here and now...today and not in the future. Both faith and grace are given from God's abundance...right now...this is NOT about our future faith...it's about faith today...in this world today...out there in the world?

Is our faith working or are we storing it up in this barn we call St Paul Lutheran Church? Does our faith and the grace given in that faith only work in the future in the Kingdom of God or do we use it now for the expansion of God's Kingdom here and now? Working our faith does NOT mean to store it up for ourselves...we are given the gift of faith and grace for our sake, yes, but it is given so that grace, as it extends to more and more people, may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God here and now, in here and out there as well.

We seem to have an insatiable greed for material possessions today, even our congregations focus on maintaining what we have...making *this* our mission instead of extending grace out there to all. Let us then, use this beautiful place, this time of worship to focus on the gift of grace we are abundantly given from God so that we may take it from here and share it in the world today and share it as freely as it has been given to us so that it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God, not just in here or in the future, but out there, right now.

In this parable before us today Jesus is showing us that an exceptionally good harvest makes a rich farmer even richer. The rich farmer's problem is not the most obvious one, what to do with his crops? The problem with this "foolish" farmer is that he never thinks to do anything else with his crops other than to keep them for himself...leaving him with a major building program in order to store it all up for himself. It never dawns on him to do anything other than to keep it all for himself

and his future.¹ For this farmer in this parable, the abundance of the land is solely from God, likewise the very gift of faith, given freely to us is a pure gift from God. Our problem with this gift is the same as the rich fool's problem, we are given an abundant gift of faith and we don't know fully what to do with it. So we attempt to store it up, keep it safe from the world out there, to maintain and protect it at all costs, after all, as Christians, it's our salvation. It never occurs to us to do anything other than keep it for ourselves.

The culture in which we live trains us to be isolated, self-centered, acquisitive, to accumulate and to hoard and we attempt to secure our lives through possessions that are given to us...but can we truly see the grace that we are given is not ours to keep or store up, it is given to be given to others. Jesus is teaching us about a very different way in the world, a culture in which we realize that we cannot secure our lives through our self-centered goals, our accumulations, and our self-righteousness. Jesus promises us that, in his service, meaning sharing the grace given, loving our neighbor, we all will prosper...though we may not prosper as the world judges prosperity...but all will prosper and in the end, this is what truly expands the Kingdom of God.

Our faith and the grace given through it is not like our material wealth that is stored up. Our faith and the grace given through it cannot be stored up to make us richer than another or rich toward God. What make us all rich before God is when grace is extended to more and more people and thanksgiving to God is increase. Our faith is not measured to make us more righteous than others! Our faith is not like our material possessions. We are not enriched with so much faith that we have to tear down our lives and the lives of others in order to store and keep it for ourselves. The abundant gift of faith given in each one of us is different but equally blessed and each one a blessing among us.

Our lessons today are directing us all to see beyond ourselves, to see the bigger picture, to see that God's treasure, is our direction and our inheritance of grace and life that takes place right now and not in our future. Through Christ we have an abundant treasure of grace that comes through his death, it is a grace that cannot be hidden or stored up where it cannot be found.

The theological intent of the Good News is the treasure of grace and faith we are all given in Jesus Christ...this treasure is not wealth to be stored away for our individual future...this treasure is an inheritance for all...an inheritance that we do not earn but we are given freely...this treasure given is the Kingdom of God open to us all here today, right now, and not the far distant future...

in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

¹ Van Harn, Roger E.. *The Lectionary Commentary Theological Exegesis for Sunday's Texts, The Third Readings: Gospels*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001. The commentary based on the appointed Gospel reading for the Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost, Year C Luke 12:13-21. In the year 2025 this passage is actually the eighth Sunday after Pentecost. The Proper number is 13, page 380.