

Giving It Up

Luke 12:13-21

August 10, 11, 2019

Beargrass Christian Church**I. INTRODUCTION.**

- A. As I said in my E-News article last week, I feel like I need to apologize.
 - 1. At times I get so tired of hearing bad news that I take a break.
 - 2. I don't read the paper, watch TV, or check the news feeds.
- B. And that is what I did for one day, starting last Saturday morning.
 - 1. I mean, how much can happen in less than 24 hours?
 - 2. I went off to church with a clueless, "business as usual" mindset.
 - 3. It didn't help that I didn't read an email from a broken-hearted church member and missed a text from my wife, Ellen.
 - 4. It didn't help that emails from the regional ministers in Texas and Ohio arrived in between the Sunday services.
- C. So we stayed with the program as it was planned and printed.
 - 1. Susan mentioned it during the concerns and celebrations and gave us time for some meditation during the pastoral prayer.
 - 2. But, in hindsight, I wonder if that was enough?
 - 3. Should I have had the courage to toss the bulletins aside?
- D. I now find it ironic that I was preaching about the Lord's Prayer and the spiritual practices and exercises we are thinking about this summer.
- E. But rather than talking about centering prayer, intercessory prayer and lament, maybe we should have taken the hour to pray and mourn together?
- F. So please forgive me.
 - 1. Some of you probably came to worship expecting to do those kinds of things—to pray and reflect on these troubling matters.
 - 2. You may have expected to hear and think about some ways our faith informs our responses to these senseless, tragic events.

II. IN FACT, I ALMOST TOSSED OUT TODAY'S TEXT.

- A. At first reading, it seemed irrelevant to what is on most of our hearts and minds.
 - 1. The story is found only in Luke and it is about stewardship.
 - 2. It is a parable about the real priorities in our lives.
 - 3. And it may actually be very relevant to what's been in the news.
- B. A comedian tells a story about a very rich, "1-percenter."
 - 1. He had just walked out of an expensive restaurant.
 - 2. Suddenly an armed robber pulled him into a dark alley.
 - 3. The robber shouted: "Your money or your life."
 - 4. There was a long pause—and the robber shouted again!
 - 5. The man said: "Don't rush me. I'm thinking it over."
- C. Jesus challenges us to think about our money and our lives.
 - 1. He talks a lot about the topic—it is a priority for him.
 - 2. And if he were teaching today—in Louisville or other cities in America—he would probably talk about it even more.
- D. Jesus takes advantage of a sibling squabble to present a parable.
 - 1. He doesn't get involved in the family feud, but he does seize the moment to talk about the BIG picture when it comes to "stuff."
 - 2. He says: "Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed! Life does not consist in the abundance of possessions!"

- E. Then Jesus tells a story.
 1. Someone has a great run of prosperity—he is on a roll!
 2. He is doing so well that his barns are about to burst.
 3. His solution is to tear them down and build bigger barns.
 4. He is so satisfied that he begins to congratulate himself.
 5. “Soul, I have ample goods laid up for many years!”
 6. “Soul, it’s time to relax, eat, drink, and PAR-ty!”
- F. We know this person—we know about “Bigger Barn Syndrome.”
 1. We meet her at dinner parties and social gatherings.
 2. We see him at all of the home football and basketball games.
 3. We play tennis with her or see him at the country club.
 4. We like this person, these people—and often have a lot of respect and admiration (and sometimes envy)—for their success.
- G. But what does Jesus call him?
 1. A “fool”—and I’m not making that up—check for yourself.
 2. It has been said that fools and their money are soon parted.
 3. But Jesus says that sometimes fools don’t part with their money.

III. WHERE HAS THIS “SOUL” GONE WRONG?

- A. We need to understand that this parable is not just about money—it is about life—our values, our priorities, our perspectives.
 1. Sometimes we overestimate our abilities, our success, our net worth, our creative genius—and forget that everything we have is a gift from God.
 2. Sometimes we lose sight of what is really important.
- B. A tragic example is in the news of one who seemed to have it all—but became the embodiment of evil—and took his life...and ruined countless others along the way.
- C. So...are we trying to become channels for God’s blessings—or are we in the bigger-and-better barn business?
- D. Jesus does not seem to be critical of those who have money.
 1. He does seem to be concerned about those who hoard money.
 2. Will this one who’s been blessed to excess bless others?
 3. Will he keep it all—or give it up and pay it forward?
 4. Jesus seems genuinely interested in the “Soul’s” soul.

IV. AND THAT’S WHERE THIS STORY HITS HOME...

- A. Because if Jesus can be concerned about the soul of an individual, is it possible that he can be concerned about the soul of a family, a church, a community, a nation?
 1. We are very well-aware that the presidential campaign and many other political campaigns are already in full swing—I know you’re thrilled about that—it never stops now!
 2. We are familiar with one of the questions that politicians often ask during their campaigns—it goes something like this...
 3. “Are you better off now than you were four years ago?”
- B. But for people of faith, perhaps there are better questions.
 1. Are more of the people in our community better off?
 2. Are more of the people in the country better off?
 3. Are more of our children better off?
 4. Are more of the poor better off?
- C. We are also familiar with another well-worn campaign cliché.
 1. It is often said: “It’s about the economy, stupid!”
 2. But for Christians, it is not just about the stupid economy.
 3. Politics cannot just be about our pocketbooks and portfolios.
 4. They must be about what kind of society we want to be.

5. Our values, our integrity, our compassion, our concern for the poor around the block and around the world are at stake.
- D. But does the nation have a bad case of “Bigger Barn Syndrome?”
1. The wealth gap continues to increase rather than decrease.
 2. Prosperity promises have helped the rich get richer.
 3. And the big barn people are pulling our political strings.
 4. The top 1%—or it now may be even .1%—own as much as the bottom 90%.
 5. Too many people—especially children—are at risk.
 6. Too many families are a paycheck away from real panic.
 7. The dollars are there—but there is a disturbing distribution problem.
- E. And yet, that doesn’t stop us from protecting our big barns.
1. Spending is skyrocketing to keep our big barns safe.
 2. The Pentagon is asking for almost \$720 billion for 2020.
 3. With that 5% increase, we will spend more on our defense budget than the next six countries on the planet combined.
- F. Another expression of “Big Barn Syndrome” relates to our guns.
1. Americans represent 5% of the world’s population.
 2. But we have accumulated 45% of the guns on the globe.
 3. There are now more guns in our country than there are people.
 4. And I found it quite telling and troublesome last week when the market dropped over 750 points—but gun company stocks rose.
 5. Right after the two latest deadly mass shootings in Dayton and El Paso, gun sales dramatically increased in the following days.
 6. And one of the hottest sellers is assault rifles.
- G. It also broke my heart to hear of soaring sales for another product.
1. I saw a commercial promoting bulletproof backpacks.
 2. It showed two little children walking down a school hallway.
 3. They may as well have been wearing bull’s-eyes on their backs.
 4. I couldn’t help but think about our triplets, our grandboys.
 5. I couldn’t help but think about your children and grandchildren, the church’s children.
 6. It is as if we have given up and accepted this as the new norm.
 7. Dear God...how have we so badly lost our way?
- H. Are you concerned...are you concerned about the soul of our country?
1. Will hate speech and racist rhetoric become the new norm?
 2. Will flying the flag at half-staff become the new norm?
 3. Will white supremacists continue to call—and take—the shots?
 4. How long will we offer the literal blood sacrifices of our children and loved ones at the altar of an archaic amendment?
- I. I realize these are very complicated matters.
1. I know there are lots of other factors and distractions.
 2. You may disagree with me, but I think we begin with the guns.
 3. We have to give up the guns...not all of them—you know which ones I am talking about.
 4. And it’s the gun laws...and the paralyzed lawmakers.
 5. And it’s some of the “big barn” people who have “bought them.”
 6. So maybe it’s time to give up some of the old laws and lawmakers?
- J. I do believe that as people of faith we cannot sit idly by...
1. We said “enough is enough” after Sandy Hook in 2012—and we have kept saying it year after year after year.
 2. But here we are again...still crying out “enough is enough.”

3. We do need to continue to offer our thoughts and prayers for those who have suffered unspeakable losses.
 - a. And, as we affirmed last week, prayer can change us.
 - b. So our prayers will and must also inspire us to action—they can embolden us to have the courage to speak truth to power.
4. And we must respond not based on our political affiliations, but from our higher, primary allegiance as disciples of the Prince of Peace.
5. When we pray together, “Thy will be done!” what could that look like when it comes to saving the soul of our communities and our country?
6. When we ask, “What would Jesus do?” what have we learned from his life and teachings and ministry that will help us now?
7. We remember God speaking through the prophets—pleading to the people to turn their swords into plowshares—pleading that they transform weapons that take life into tools that give life.
8. What could that look like today?
9. But we have to believe—whether we work alone or together—that change is possible.
- K. One who has gone before us has shown us that change can happen.
 1. One who gave up his life said: “Those who passively accept evil are as much involved in it as those who perpetrate it.”
 2. “Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.”
 3. He said: “I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love...will have the final word.”