

To Be Rich Towards God

“Fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And of the things that you have prepared, whose will they be? So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God.” Luke 12:13-21

What does it mean to be rich towards God?

This story from the Gospel of Luke gives us two examples of what not to do. In the first one a man has asked Jesus, very reasonably, I thought, “Tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.” What could be more right -weren't we all taught to share? But Jesus skims over the brother's selfishness and turns the attention to the man in the right, the one who asks the question. Jesus challenges him with another story. This is a story about a rich man, very prudently, I thought, saving for the future.

Jesus challenges both of these reasonable people.

“Fool!” Jesus says. “This very night your life is being demanded of you. And of the things that you have prepared, whose will they be? So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God.”

I am always a little concerned by these passages in which Jesus challenges the reasonable person who seems to be in the right. I don't want to be the fool. So how can I, we, be rich towards God? What are the riches to hold onto?

We start by looking at our own lives. The man who demands that Jesus tell his brother to share the inheritance, is looking at his brother and condemning him.

“Who appointed me judge?” asks Jesus.

We know of course that Jesus will be the judge, but Jesus is saying, not now, and not at our direction. He asks us to look at our own lives.

And, as we look at our own lives, Jesus asks us to consider more than the material, more than physical things. The rich man who builds a new barn to hold all the grain is totally caught up in himself and in his material well-being. He is so selfish that he is literally talking to himself.

“Soul,” we can almost hear him say, “We have this planned out now. I’ve got the 401k, the investment alternatives, the long-term and the short-term income, the estate plan, the right attorney who will oversee, now I will have a great retirement. I’m not going to get caught lacking for any material thing in my old age.”

“Fool!” says Jesus, “Don’t you realize that this very night your life is being demanded? And whose will these riches be?” The emphasis here is on life. This very night (according to the story) it is your life, (not your money,) that is being demanded.

The riches that will continue to be ours must be in the lives we live, for that is what is being demanded. Our lives offer us the possibility of riches beyond our imagining. And the richness in our lives comes from connecting with God in our lives. Right here. Right now.

Connecting to God means having a relationship with God. Connecting to God takes place during a lifetime and over a lifetime. In connecting with God we can begin to look on ourselves as on a journey, a wonderful wild, beautiful journey, exterior and interior, with God. As we journey we are mindful of God, aware of God, acknowledging and recognizing God at all times along the way.

Journeying with God is called spirituality. Dr. Corrine Ware, Prof. at the Episcopal Seminary of the Southwest talks about this richness of life in God that is called spirituality. She says that spirituality gives life a different dimension. She says that this spiritual awareness comes about by responding to the Creator, and by sensing that God accompanies us always. In her book, Connecting to God, Prof. Ware talks about nurturing the connection to God.

How can we nurture our connection with God? Through regular prayer.

Through study of Scripture. Through taking the Sacrament and regular worship. Through holy reading. By taking time for quiet with God. By taking time for Holy rest. By going deeper. And by cultivating that sense that God is with us *on* our journey and *in* our journey.

When we start to participate actively in our spiritual journey we will know God's deep abiding Love. We will know God's Presence. We will walk with God and talk with GOD. That is building up riches in God.

This past week at Family Grille Night we looked at the lives of four new saints, Sojourner Truth, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Amelia Bloomer and Harriet Ross Tubman (July 20). We looked at qualities and circumstances that the Church witnesses in the lives of people that make them commendable. Three of the many things that the church looks for are: Concern for others, Love and Joy. In small groups we looked at these qualities in the lives of the new saints. And we talked about where in our own lives we had experienced people who showed these qualities.

At an earlier Grille Night – my first night here at St. Johns – we talked about our spiritual journeys. We talked in small groups around questions like When did you feel God was close in your life? When did you feel God was far away from you in your life?

We each have a spiritual journey. We each have a relationship with God. This relationship is ours to notice, to enjoy, and to cultivate. God loves us beyond our imagining, before we do anything and despite anything we have done. And God wants nothing more than for us to notice our relationship, to hold onto Jesus' hand and to allow the power of the Holy Spirit to heal us.

As we live, journeying with God, we will experience the Love and Joy of God: that deeply welling spring of life that powers all things, all Creation. We will experience something that is more wonderful, more meaningful, more satisfying, more precious, more exciting, more important, more beautiful, more intellectually stimulating, and more emotionally fulfilling than anything we can imagine, that is, living a life *Rich Towards God*.

Amen.