

St Bartholomew's Burnley 3rd August 2025

Readings Hosea 1.1-11

Colossians 3.1-11

Luke 12.13-21

Today's parable only appears in Luke's Gospel.

Throughout the remainder of this year, we will continue to read many of Luke's parables, stories and illustrations that Jesus uses to impart news of the Kingdom of God, and the responsibility he entrusts to us to create the heavenly hope here and now.

The parables of Jesus are scattered throughout the Gospel narratives and call us to think and reflect on our own relationship with God and the call to build God's Kingdom here on earth, the here and now for all of God's creation.

Luke's language and style make it clear that he is learned and comes from a reasonably privileged background. He would then be aware of the temptations that wealth and privilege offer. Perhaps this is why his Gospel is understood as being the Gospel of God's justice because he is aware of his privilege, and the responsibility, as a person of privilege, even status has in building the Kingdom to

embrace the outcast, poor, the orphaned, to be an inclusive community of love for one another, irrespective of our own status. The purpose of wealth creation is to share the gifts of God to enhance our own humanity, the community of which we are all part, and not for individual or personal accumulation to pass on to family or self, but rather to ensure all have access to health, housing, education and income.

Each week we read about new billionaires, or existing ones accumulating more wealth for personal use. Yes, it is true that some share or distribute funds to worthy causes, while others just seem to accumulate for what reason I am not sure other than to drive a Maserati or build a bigger house. I am reminded how many of the Stately homes in the United Kingdom were built on the back of slavery and the monopoly of the East India Company.

There is no doubt that Australia is a rich and prosperous country by world standards. We have more wealth than at any time in our history yet at the same time have a cost-of-living crisis and a lack of commitment from many individuals and corporations to pay taxes that would ensure better health, housing and education for all of us. I often wonder how our

communities would look if the Billionaires funds were shared with higher wages for those who create the wealth.

In today's Gospel Jesus speaks against the dangers of wealth. He has been in dispute with Pharisees and scribes for some time. However, the crowds continue to follow and push him in great numbers. They are interested in what he has to say. Among the crowd would have been people from many different walks of life. In this context Jesus once again turns to instruct his followers of the essence of the Kingdom of God. He brushes aside the dispute about inheritance and instead tells the parable of the rich fool. This is probably the most condemnatory of all the parables; nowhere else in the Gospels is anyone called an outright fool. Here, Luke's Jesus extols that they should not seek security in wealth and greed {the Greek meaning the desire of gaining more and more} or in the accumulation of possessions in abundance, but rather in being in tune with God and concern for the other.

For the rich man his abundant crop will provide security, but his only problem is how to store it. Sounds to me a little like the debates about superannuation and leaving the family an inheritance. For the rich man building a bigger barn allows him to sit back with ease assured he can live in comfort. This is no guarantee however that his life will be long and that wealth is no security in itself.

Central to this parable is a theme that becomes very important in Luke's Jesus that nothing is more destructive of life and our humanity in general is our increasingly preoccupation with holding more and more and seeking to increase our wealth for wealth's sake. Our fear of insecurity prevents us from sharing and in growing our relationship with God and our concern for our neighbour. Tough stuff you may say. I have a mortgage, family and a range of costs associated with living and I am struggling to make ends meet. Does not God understand?

This is a parable that can shock us as well as make us anxious. It strikes at our very desire for comfort and the material care of our families, but it is not a parable that says we should not live as the homeless and on

the streets without shelter, food and warmth and enjoy the fruits of our labour. As Francis Moloney says in his commentary on this passage. "You cannot take it with you"

As I said earlier, we have more wealth than at any time in our history our challenge is the setting of our priorities as followers of Jesus and to challenge our community to act not just in their own interests but to be concerned about the wider community. To not accumulate but rather to share the common wealth. At the time Luke was writing his Gospel he urged his community to give up everything like the first disciples and to share and hold everything in common.

This seems so far away from our world of today that it may seem unrealistic. At the same time the modern western world is built on anxiety. Faces appear weary and puzzled by and living with questions unanswered.

Today's Gospel asks us to reflect and to take stock as what is important in our lives. Jesus says no to wealth and yes to our relationships with one another and God. These are to be our priorities and security. As Tom Wright says in his excellent commentary on Luke when

Jesus speaks about “treasures in heaven” he does not mean the afterlife. Heaven is God’s sphere of created reality, which as the Lord’s prayer suggests, will one day colonize earth, our sphere, completely”.

Amen