

Caring is Everything Luke 12:13-21

When Victoria, Queen of England, stayed at her summer residence, she enjoyed dressing in simple clothes so that she would not be recognized when taking long walks through the woods. On one such occasion, she was caught in a heavy rainstorm. Noticing an old cottage, she ran toward it seeking shelter. In the cottage an old peasant woman lived alone. The Queen greeted her and asked if she might borrow an umbrella. She added that she would see that the umbrella was returned as soon as possible.

The old woman had no idea that she was in the presence of the queen. Therefore, she answered grudgingly: “Well, I have two umbrellas. One is very good – almost new. I have used it very little. The other is quite old and worn. You may borrow the old one. The new one I will not lend, for who knows whether or not it would be returned to me?” Whereupon, she gave the queen the old torn and battered umbrella with the spokes sticking out on all sides. The queen thought to herself, “With this kind of weather, a bad umbrella is better than nothing at all,” and accepted it politely. The next morning a servant in royal livery arrived at the cottage and returned the umbrella to the peasant woman. When the servant thanked her in the name of Queen Victoria, the old woman was mortified. Feeling much remorse at not having offered her queen the very best she had, she cried out, “If only I had known! Oh, if only I had known!”

“Whoever lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God is a fool,” Jesus says to his disciples in today’s Gospel lesson. He tells the parable about a wealthy farmer whose harvest has been so plentiful that there isn’t enough room to store the grain. “What am I to do? For I have no place to store my crops,” the rich man says. “I will pull down my barns and build bigger ones and store my grain and my goods in them, and I will say to my soul, ‘soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; take things easy, eat, drink, and have a good time.’” But God said to him, “Fool! This very night the demand will be made for your soul; and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?” One can almost hear that man crying out, “If only I had known! Oh, if only I had known, I would have given the very best I had to God.”

I have only just a minute. Only sixty seconds in it.
Didn’t seek it, didn’t choose it. But it’s up to me to use it.
I must suffer if I lose it. Give account if I abuse it.
Just a tiny little minute. But eternity is in it!

In God’s eternal scheme of things, your time on earth might be less than a tiny minute or even the twinkling of an eye. And yet eternity is in it, which is to say, God is in it. God has redeemed your time on earth. God is present to you during your time on earth. This very minute, God wants you for his very own. This very minute God wants to be at the center of your life. This very minute God wants to be the number ONE priority in your life.

In his letter to the Colossians, the Apostle Paul says, “There is only Christ. He is everything and he is in everything.” That is to say, in and through Jesus Christ, God has totally identified with us in our journey through time.

A class of second graders in a parochial school was asked to draw a picture which showed what they would like to do if Jesus came to spend a day with them. After the students had worked on the project awhile, one little girl went up to the teacher's desk with her almost completed drawing in hand. "Miss Kelly," she said, "I have a question. How do spell Bloomingdale's?"

Clearly, that little girl had the right idea. Whether it's shopping at Bloomingdale's or pursuing a career or raising a family or taking a vacation or harvesting grain or building barns, unless we are relating all these activities to God's presence in life, we are fools!

Unless we are living day-to-day and minute by minute within the context of our dependence on God, not only for our life but for our way of life, we are fools! "This very night the demand will be made for your soul." God says to the self-centered rich man in today's Gospel.

Christopher Morley once wrote: *If we discovered that we only had five minutes left to say all we wanted to say, every phone would be occupied by people calling other people to stammer that they loved them.*"

In other words, if we discovered that we only had five minutes left, we would all be rushing to put God, who is love, at the center of what little of life remained.

We who had devoted so much time trying to store up treasures for ourselves and so little time making ourselves rich in the sight of God would see what fools we'd been. Jesus is telling us that now is the time to transform ego-centered existence into God-centered life. Now is the time to recognize and embrace God's infinite love as life's greatest treasure.

More than seventy years ago Frederick Van Hugel was being acclaimed as one of the generation's most inspiring writers. He was a man who had profound insight into prayer and meditation., and he wrote books that have been helpful to a great many people in this area of their life. But the people who knew him personally remember him for another reason. He was a man who listened patiently to what others were saying. He was a man who responded willingly to what others were needing. The nurse who attended him in his final illness said that, weak as he was, Van Hugel was obviously trying to say something from his deathbed. She said she leaned over to listen and he whispered to her, "Caring is everything! Nothing matters but caring!"

Jesus came to help us be rich toward God. We become rich toward God when we accept him as the Giver. The person who is rich toward God takes his existence as a gift. He also takes the existence of every other person as a gift to him. The person rich toward God takes all created life and the whole physical world as a gift. In thanksgiving to God, we use, share and care for all things.

The person rich toward God takes faith, hope, and love as the crowning gift. When we become rich toward God, we see Jesus as pure gift. We know this, because we know the supreme gift of being loved by God just as we are. That is, we know we are saved by God's grace, not our own moral worth or any other achievement. And the greatest expression of this gift is the living presence of Jesus – the one who died at the hands of covetous men, in order that you and I might be freed from the curse of covetousness.

The pastor of a church in San Antonio was making his daily rounds ministering to the poor. He stopped in front of an old broken-down house that was home for a Mexican family in which there were two sons. The younger of the two was disabled. As the pastor parked his car in front of the house, he was greeted enthusiastically by the older brother. "Wow! Your shiny new car sure looks great," the boy said. "Where did you get it?"

The pastor replied, "You know son, I don't make much money in my line of work and I couldn't afford to buy a car like that for myself. But I have a brother in Houston who makes a lot of money in the oil business. He gave me this car." The boy looked up at the pastor and said, "I wish I could be a brother like that!" You know, the boy could have said, "I wish I had a brother like that!" But clearly that young boy was in on the secret of life's true meaning and purpose. Caring is everything! Nothing matters but caring!!

Thank God we have a Savior who cares for us!!! Amen!!!!