

Sermon on Luke 12:13-21
August 4, 2013

There was a certain rich farmer who was in the midst of harvesting his fields when suddenly his manager ran in and exclaimed as he fell to his knees, “My lord, we are only half way finished with your harvest and already there is more grain than your barns will hold! What are we to do?” The farmer was surprised by this abundance and told his manager that he would think about the problem and tell him what to do in the morning.

So the farmer sat and began to ponder how to solve his problem. At first his abundance amazed him, but the more he thought about it the less amazed he became. Why shouldn’t his fields produce abundantly with his good planning and great business skills? Now what should he do with all of his grain?

His first idea was this—“I know, I’ll tear down all of my current buildings and build larger ones big enough to store all of my grain and my goods! And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have enough goods stored up for many years; so relax, eat, drink, be merry! As he was pondering all of this he fell asleep. While he slept the Lord God appeared to him and said, “You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things that you have prepared, whose will they be?”

The farmer awoke with a start and fell to his knees, begging God for mercy and another chance. But God answered the farmer saying, “Why? Did not my servant Moses command you to love the Lord your God with all of your heart, and with all of your soul and with all of your might and your neighbor as yourself? Did he not warn you not to forget the Lord your God when all that you have is multiplied? Did he not warn you not to say to yourself, ‘My power and the might

of my own hand have gotten me this wealth?’ Did he not tell you to remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you wealth, so that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your ancestors? Did he not warn you that if you do forget the Lord your God and follow other gods to serve and worship them, that you shall surely perish?

But the farmer protested saying that he didn’t worship other gods, only the Lord God of Israel! Really my son, God answered him. All I heard from you this day was that it was your planning, your business sense that increased your crops and that you needed to build bigger barns to store your grain and your goods. That sounds like you were worshipping another god to me—yourself! I didn’t hear one word of thanksgiving to me for the great harvest that I provided for you!

The farmer begged, “Please Lord God, give me another chance, I beg you! I know that I don’t always love you with my whole heart; that I think that it was my work that produced this abundance. It isn’t easy for me especially when all of my friends and neighbors congratulate me on the great work I’ve done; help me to always put you first in my life!”

God answered him, “My prophets have shown you how to put me first—it’s to think of others before yourself. Didn’t my prophet Isaiah tell you to learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, and plead for the widow? Did not my prophet Micah tell you to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? Did not my prophet Jeremiah tell you to truly act justly with one another, to not oppress the alien, the orphan and the widow, or shed innocent blood and not to go after other gods?”

But my Lord God, the farmer argued, I have not taken anything unjustly from others. No you haven't God answered him, but you also did not think to give any of your abundance to those who are needy. You were going to hold tightly to what you perceived as yours because you did not trust me to provide for you! You trusted in something else besides me for your salvation and that is your idolatry!

I gave you an abundance of grain so that you may be a blessing to those who have none. I blessed you so that you could be a blessing to others, but what have you done—you've kept it all for yourself!

Lord, the farmer begged, do not take my life from me this night! Spare your servant and I will show you that I am a changed man. I will build new barns, but I will keep in my old barns only what I need for myself. In the new barns I will put my excess grain so that those who have none can come and purchase with what ever money they have. If they have no money they can take a certain amount, at least to provide for their family. Please, the farmer begged, let me show you that I am a changed man!

The farmer awoke with a start and saw that his life was spared! He praised God and immediately went to work planning his new barns and his new business plan—all the while thinking to himself, whose things are these.