

Not Mine, But Ours!

Sermon November 20, 2022

Scripture Readings: Psalm 100:1-5 and Revelation 3:1-6

Golden Verse: *“Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”* Luke 6:38

Do you have a piece of furniture that you have been saving locked in a storage unit, just in case your kids or neighbours need it? Or a few sets of shoes or socks stashed away – just in case you run out? Have you noticed that we sometimes have so many things that cleaning out our closets feels like Christmas as we discover things we forgot we stored away?

I read somewhere that most people spend the first half of their lives collecting things and the second half trying to get rid of things. As I listen to friends cleaning out their parents’ homes and “down-sizing”, it appears we do a better job during the first half of our lives than the second!

We want more, newer, faster, better. No matter how much we have, we never feel like we have enough. And, yes, this drives our economy. And this is an ADDICTION.

Yes, I said addiction. And this addiction often comes with a powerful word: “MINE”. We utter this word many times a day almost unconsciously: “MINE”. We are like children who got their toys from us, but after they get them in their hands they say this powerful word: Mine! Not long time ago, I saw a 3 years old child pushing her grandfather out from their car, saying: “You cannot sit here. It is my car.”

What does our faith say about living a life dedicated to the care and protection of material things? To this idea of “Mine!”?

Today, in our scripture lesson, we hear about a person who was collecting and storing up treasures. I wonder, and suspect you are wondering, what they were storing these treasures up for. Was it for personal gratification or planning for a rainy day? Some families, communities, and even churches store up resources for a rainy day, and then act as if a rainy day will never come.

Aren’t we all inclined to store up treasures? Aren’t we told that good financial planning requires thinking ahead, saving and preparing for rainy days?

So, this person is happy with his accumulated goods. We don't know exactly what he has accumulated—maybe grain, cloth, jewels, who knows—but we do know that this stored up treasure is the source of great satisfaction and pleasure.

But then the person learns that he will die that very night! No retirement. No bucket list. It doesn't seem fair, and yet it's a good reality check.

Dear beloved, every day is a gift. Tomorrow is uncertain and our journey home to God can occur at any time. TODAY is all we can be certain of. God invites us to live into this powerful possibility and promise.

Mahatma Gandhi, a disciple of Christ, said: "live simply so that others may simply live."

I read a great idea from Marie Kondo (in her 2014 book titled *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*), when she offers a ritual to offer things back into the cycle of life. Whatever clothing, books or other belongings you are ready to give away, hold them in your hands, saying, "You have served me well—I release you back into creation." How liberating to free ourselves from objects that fill our drawers, closets and physical space! This can be a radical experience.

Today, we honour generosity through legacy gifts, sharing something which was mine but now is OURS, in the church.

We all might have the temptation to build barns to store what we accumulated during our lifetime. This person wanted to protect his treasures rather than sharing them. He forgot that he also received everything from God, not only to enjoy by himself but to share with others in order to bring joy and happiness into others' lives as well.

Financial planners talk about the concept of our "short-term" and "long-term" plans.

A positive example of long-term planning can be the person who plants trees today, recognizing that they will bless others in the future.

What is your faith telling you today about storing goods? We know that our lives are in God's hands who is able to give, day by day, as much as we need, and He can graciously provide.

I invite you to think about planned giving as any action that connects your decisions today, with the future. God gives you an opportunity to make a decision on what you want to happen to your goods when you will not need them. You can make a legal decision to share your goods as gifts when you no longer need them.

Jesus says: those will be your treasures in heaven. And with those, you will bless others.

Today, our Session can focus on our mission because there was, once upon a time, a faithful Calvin member, Margaret Terol, who in her will included our church, and we got her gifts after she did not need them anymore. Those gifts were HER gifts, and they became OUR gifts. She was thinking about OUR church, OUR world, OUR needs and OUR opportunities. Her actions are talking to us TODAY and enriching us TODAY.

Are you wondering what the Lord requires of us? “To love and serve God with all our hearts and souls”. What is important to our God? Executing justice for the orphan and the widow, and caring for the stranger. What if we think about how our lives and our estates – whatever is left when we go home to God – could care for our community and continue to share God’s love with the world?

You may be thinking that a planned gift or estate planning is hard. But it takes just a half hour to discuss that with your lawyer, and to make changes in your will. And what we will leave for the Glory of God in helping others, God will return to us in His heavenly glory as everlasting gifts. This is why Jesus is encouraging us to gather gifts in heaven.

Today we have incredible power to create a happy and joyful future for others. If we might die tonight, the Lord would ask us whether we shared HIS gifts with others, or we acted like this person in the Bible, who was storing up his goods. At His throne, we cannot find the excuse: Oh Lord, I planned for tomorrow to create a new will ... but You called me home too early.

Imagine what a different ending Jesus’ parable might have had if the Rich Fool, rather than storing up treasure for personal pleasure, shared even a portion of those resources for the benefit of God’s creation. What if the Rich Fool had left a plan to distribute some of the remaining treasures after this life, to participate in God’s mission. If he had planned everything wisely, today his name would not be the “Rich Fool” but he would be called the “Wise Planner.”

The empowering message of this parable is that we do not need to settle for barns when we have a future to create! Jesus invites us to see beyond the stuff of this world to the future we are creating in our hearts and minds—a future where hunger, sickness, economic injustice, homelessness and war no longer exist because people have invested in sharing and caring, in equity and security for all persons and in building God’s beloved community.

Are you ready to change your focus from what is MINE to what is OURS? God and the world are waiting for us to choose. What might be your legacy?

May each of us discover the power of generosity in this life! Amen