

Treasure and the Heart – Rev'd Christine Barren - Sunday 1st August 2010

Reading: Luke 12:13 – 21 “The Rich Fool”

Sometimes I feel as though there is no room left in my head or my heart! I seem to be overladen with “things”, “people”, “experiences”, - “treasures” to be honoured and appreciated. Sometimes the “packed to the rafters” feeling is also caused by difficulties but really it is much more often the former. They are things that can truly be called “alleluia” experiences.

Today's story is one of the parables that Jesus told to help his followers understand what he was telling them of a new way of being; a new way of understanding God. I was taught that a parable is a story where the immediate meaning points to a deeper truth.

As I read and re-read the story often called “The Rich Fool” I found I was not drawn so much to the obvious (and, let me say, equally important) reflection about the foolishness of putting all ones' energy into the gaining of material possessions rather than sharing them; of having God at the centre of your life rather than whatever things you have “stored up” in your barn.

Rather I would explore with you today the possibility of being that rich fool not by the storing up of tangible possessions but rather of storing up so much inside yourself that there is no room for God, or, at best, God takes second place.

As I have spent some time thinking about this, I realise that part of the danger is that what I am talking about is inherently good – inherently life-giving. The danger comes with the “too much”!

Let me give you an example.....

Friends are most precious gifts and most of us are privileged to have friends that belong to the different parts of our life journeys. I have a couple of friends still from school, some from university days and some from the years when our sons were growing up. Friends from parishes, friends from teaching - the list is growing.

Each time I catch up with one I am filled with a determination to keep in touch better; to ring those other friends too! Suddenly my mind and my heart are filled to overload.

And another example - I feel very strongly about our country being generous to those who come to our shores fleeing danger in their own country. I feel as strongly about the fact that we have people living in our local community who have no roof over their head.

Over the years I have been involved in a small way in both these issues. “Yet not enough“ I hear my heart saying. “Not enough!”

I'm sure you can get the gist of what I am saying. I'm sure you each have your own examples. So can I take you back to the story - the impetus for these thoughts.

The parable Jesus told speaks of a rich man whose land has produced an abundant harvest. He realises that there is not enough room in the barns he has to store all the grain.

“I must build newer and bigger ones” he says. “Then there will be enough food to last me for years. I can live my life now without care. I can really just enjoy myself!”

But God had other ideas! His life was to end that very night. His possessions would be of little use to him. Missing was a relationship with God.

I think most of us would say we understand the parable. We have a goal to not put an over-importance on possessions. Certainly as Christians, we are encouraged to share what we have with others. As I have already said, I think this is an important thing of which to be reminded – regularly!!

However I think we also need to explore what the parable says about the importance of a relationship with God. I’m sorry that the gospel did not take us a little further this morning

Listen to the next few verses.....

He said to his disciples “ For this reason I tell you: Do not be anxious about your life; what to eat, or your body, what to wear. For your life is more than food and your body more than clothes
Vs 22 &23.

He then goes on with those beautiful words that tell of the ravens that are fed by God and the lilies of the field that are clothed in such beauty by God, yet neither possess anything.

I think we need to be reminded of this often! Reminded not just about possessions but about things inside us that can so easily “possess” us. I am sure that, with the best intentions, we often end up leaving no space for God to look after us, to transform us as was done for those ravens and lilies.

One day last year I was trying to describe to my spiritual director how I felt about this.

“At home I have a most beautiful wooden bowl that John gave me. It is hand made and you can see the aged beauty of the wood and the craftsmanship of the maker. However it holds my keys and a whole lot of other accumulated stuff. The things are important but the bowl is overloaded so I cannot see its beauty. I’d just like to empty it out! On her wise advice, I went home and did exactly that and just sat with the bowl for a few weeks – the keys found another home. Then slowly I replaced some of the objects in the bowl - but never so many that I could not see the beauty of the bowl. My bowl needed space to allow God in. There was a place for some objects to be there too but never so many that God got lost.”

May I encourage you to empty your barn, your bowl, a little this week. Give some of the things that clutter it up back to God; give some of the things that clutter it up to other people – you don’t have to do it all yourself! (Much as you may want to)

Take some time to allow God to feed you, to clothe you in garments of great beauty. Take some time **now** to experience God’s grace to you - and indeed may I take some time to do the same.

As we do this, I am sure we will find real treasure – treasure that will be revealed in a loving friendship, a joy in family, a passion for justice. But I think we will also find that such treasures will be rich reflections of a new found relationship with God.

Christine Barren