

THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST (PROPER 13C)

Colossians 3:1-11, Psalm 49:1-11, Luke 12:13-21

July 31, 2016

St. Mark's-in-the-Valley Episcopal Church, Los Olivos, California

The Rev. Randall C.K. Day, D.Min.

What do we have?

Almighty God, Maker of heaven and earth, as Jesus taught his disciples to be persistent in prayer, give us patience and courage never to lose hope, but always to bring our prayers before you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Based on the Additional Collects, The Church of England

A few years back I shared this prayer of Fr. Richard Rohr with you:

“We love how you love us.”

A Prayer by Fr. Richard Rohr

Loving God, we love how you love us. We love how you free us. We love what you have given and created to surround us. Help us to recognize, and to rejoice in, what has been given, even in the midst of what is not given. Help us not to doubt all that you have given us, even when we feel our very real shortcomings. We thank you for the promise and sign of your love in the Eternally Risen Christ, pervading all things in the universe, unbound by any of our categories of logic or theology.

We offer you ourselves back in return. We offer you our bodies, our little lives, our racing minds and restless hearts into this one wondrous circle of Love that is You. My life is no longer just about me, but it is all about you.

Adapted from Radical Grace: Daily Meditations, p. 155, day 165

We hear this prayer and today's gospel reading – and the parable of the rich man – in the summer in which we have had two political conventions and are awash in competing assertions

about a range of topics, many of which focus on what we as individuals have or don't have and what we as a nation have or don't have, often what we have lost or what we want....

We also hear this parable in the context of our own lives and whatever season of life we are in –

shaped by many factors but very often including what we have or don't have – maybe what we used to have or hope to have.

Fr. Richard's prayer focuses us on awakening to **who** we **are**, the reality of what we have been given, on what we can authentically have or give – and on what we share with all of humanity.

He prays: “Help us to recognize, and to rejoice in, what has been given, even in the midst of what is not given. Help us not to doubt all that you have given us, even when we feel our very real shortcomings.”

Our true gift is God's constantly creating and transforming love that “pervades” all things – that is in absolutely everything, though we are hardly awake to it, hardly present to it.

And we are typically even less attuned to this being the same for every person. Everything that is, including everything that matters is given to everyone as both an individual and a common inheritance.

And yet, both those who may see themselves or may be seen by others as the richest OR the poorest so frequently see themselves as impoverished. How often are we taken over by concentration in our minds on some particular lack or need?

Whole days or more can be

lost to being consumers consumed by consumption.

The parable Jesus tells about the rich man is an answer to a question from another rich man – at least someone in that ancient society who was rich enough to be concerned with an inheritance – which, as in our day, was only a small percentage of people.

I think of the last will and testament of my first American ancestor, who had the same name as my father, Robert Day. That first American Robert Day died in 1648 and even though he was considered to be well off because he owned a house and land, the entire inventory of his life fit on one piece of paper, even though it was itemized to the level of such things as “one brass kettle,” and “six pewter dishes.” Also, like the voice in the crowd crying out to Jesus, that inheritance wasn't shared. It went initially to his wife, under the conservatorship of three men, and then to his eldest son.

We live in the age of the Container Store and Amazon Prime.

Like the rich man in the parable, we often see ourselves as having storage problems.... and we can solve our storage problems by having Amazon Prime deliver more storage bins in two days (sometimes sooner!) for “free.”

We are each writing our own parables.... this one that Jesus tells

is just one of millions, even billions of such fables – except we are living ours, shaping ours in this real world.

And even though it appears that the story is about what we have or don't have, what lodges in our brains and internal voices as "need," the narrative is truly about what we already have and about how connected or isolated we are in both our perceptions and our practice.

The same goes for our shared life in this faith community. How awake are we to the wealth and promise of the love

we are given all together? How attuned are we to the possibilities for sharing it? How caught are we on one number or another on a budget or finance report when God's provision for what God wants to do in us and with us is limitless?

What story, what parable about who we are, what we have, what we need, poverty, abundance and generosity are we writing day by day – each of us, all of us together, in our country, our world? Among all the people with whom we share our lives?

Listen reflectively to this prayer by Fr. Richard:

- Loving God, we love how you love us.
- We love how you free us.
- We love what you have given and created to surround us.
- Help us to recognize, and to rejoice in, what has been given, even in the midst of what is not given.
- Help us not to doubt all that you have given us, even when we feel our very real shortcomings.
- We thank you for the promise and sign of your love in the Eternally Risen Christ, pervading all things in the universe, unbound by any of our categories of logic or theology.
- We offer you ourselves back in return.
- We offer you our bodies, our little lives, our racing minds and restless hearts into this one wondrous circle of Love that is You.
- My life is no longer just about me, but it is all about you.



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