



The Inclusive Community

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

August 1, 2010

Trust

Luke 12: 13-21

Homily of Kathleen M.B. Bailey

Have you noticed that we are a nation of **things** - possessions - valued treasures. Now that we don't manufacture as much in the USA, we are more reliant on our services AND if you look around, you may think that self storage is our fastest growing service. Thousands of us are so overflowing with **things** that we are spilling over into storage areas at a tremendous rate.

Somehow people have developed a belief that having that one more possession will fill the emptiness, solve the problem, make us whole. Many have commented that this is also what drives some of us who are constantly dealing with weight issues. I'll feel much better when I eat that cake, buy one more **thing**. When one more doesn't work, we try again and eventually need a new place to store our treasures so we can continue searching for the one that will miraculously fill our need. We certainly don't want to part with those we already accumulated so we store them away.

I have elderly friends of deep faith who have so many **things** they have accumulated and yet they fear even lending them out because they just might need them when they are gone. So they pass over leaving a wealth that families fight over, destroying themselves and anyone in the wake.

How many of us have fantasized about receiving a windfall of money, the lottery, an inheritance, proceeds from a law suit? It would make us feel relieved and secure at last. Do you think you would then be free of worries? How many wealthy people who seem to have it all end up in dire straits or commit suicide. How easy it is to say that the other person's grass is greener.

Did we not hear Jesus? Did we not trust his words? It is said a number of times in scripture that we will be provided for if we have faith - if we trust God.

TRUST

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Today's parable was clear that the wealth must not be the focus. It will prevent us from seeing what is really important. Did we not open our ears and hear the message? Did we not trust the promise?

One of the keys we sometimes miss in scripture, but is essential to understanding is the importance of motivation. Joseph back in Genesis built new barns to store the abundant harvest of the good years so that the people (even those who attempted to kill him) would have enough to eat during the famine years. He wasn't motivated by greed. The rich fool in today's Gospel thought only of himself.

As I told this congregation a couple weeks ago, the Spirit has a way of getting me to talk about what I need to hear. My last sermon was on priorities, a subject that was a real struggle for me. Is it coincidence that the next time I am asked to speak is on storing away treasures. Guilty as charged. I buy items I really don't need. I have an exceedingly hard time getting rid of things and yes, I will admit I have a storage unit. I blame this behavior on the fact that I come from a long line of hoarders and collectors.

My mother loved beautiful things and collecting was a valued hobby. I used to love watching her as she walked around the house studying each item and appreciating its shape, color, detail. My father was an inventor, a creator, a fix-it man. He saved everything because it may be useful someday. Is it any wonder that none of their children are able to contain the clutter. I can't imagine life without beautiful things surrounding me and I know the minute I throw something away I will need it.

My husband was one of those dear souls who believed that if you aren't using it you get rid of it. He would throw something away and fortunately or unfortunately as the case may be, I took out the trash. I would pull a variety of his discards from the trash and hide them away. Inevitably the day would come that he would say, "I need an item for a project" which he would then describe, I would go and get something that seemed to meet the need. He would exclaim "that is perfect where did you get it". My response was "You threw it away but I took it out of the trash."

The rich man building bigger barns to store his crops reminds me of a birthday when I was young. My mother had a beautiful cake created for me. The cake was the full skirted dress of a doll. It was beautiful. Either mother knew me so well or she knew herself. She had a second cake made so we would not have to cut the doll's skirt. Well, as anticipated, I did not want to cut the dress; the doll cake was so beautiful. We kept the cake for many days but as you all could predict, it started to go bad. The beauty was turning to mold. I can still remember watching that beautiful cake being thrown into the furnace.

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I struggle even today with "**things**" when something is lost or broken I could easily get upset. Yet, I remember an incident many years ago when we had custody of Fran an extremely troubled teenager. I remember one day that her carelessness broke a bowl that I was particularly fond of. I had the impulse to be angry yet for some reason, at that point the Spirit interceded. I thankfully was helped to weigh the importance of the bowl and the importance of a troubled youngster. I wish I could say that I always react that way to loss of "things" but I do try.

Perhaps to emphasize the importance of this message, the writer in Luke chose to have God actually speak in this parable: "But God said to him, 'you fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?'"

We are a society of "I deserve its" Legislators seem perfectly content to vote against a bill to help those who have been harmed in the 9/11 tragedy but are comfortable helping the wealthy increase their wealth.

When will we remember that our stored grain will go to waste, our riches to someone else, our beautiful keepsakes, our cakes will be thrown away. "When the fruits of the earth are not used to enhance the life of the earth, they lose their value; they spoil and even decompose. Life itself is the far greater good; goods only enhance life"

Diane Bergant, in Preaching the New Lectionary: Year C (*The Liturgical Press*, Collegeville, Minnesota, 2000) said "Whenever we worship the created rather than Creator, we have lowered our sights and limited our vision - we have 'missed the mark,'" Material things are not evil in themselves. God's creation is good, just as our bodies are good. It is how we use them that matters.

My sister Janie who would be 76 years old today, suffered from extreme poverty, severe health problems and many fears as she raised her two daughters Debbie and Cindy. These young women with many trials of their own were raised with such love, faith and hope that in spite of everything, they are the most positive people I know. They bring joy in so many ways to so many people. Sure they are hoping for that windfall, but they truly prove that the riches are not all material.

Oscar Wilde in the 19th century said "ordinary riches can be stolen, real riches cannot. In your soul are infinitely precious things that cannot be taken from you."

Let's trust in the promises of the creative Spirit. The vibrations sent forth and the God that is within us is worth more than any material wealth. Open your hearts to the message and TRUST.