

REFLECTING ON GIVING 22 November 2015

Luke 12:13-21

“The rich fool” Rev Dr AJ Groenewald

¹³ *Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”*

¹⁴ *Jesus replied, “Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?”* ¹⁵ *Then he said to them, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.”*

¹⁶ *And he told them this parable: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. ¹⁷ He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’*

¹⁸ *“Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. ¹⁹ And I’ll say to myself, “You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.”’*

²⁰ *“But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’*

²¹ *“This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.” Amen*

Jesus told a parable that needs to be understood in its own context. Jesus was telling this parable to peasants who understood the meaning. To us this meaning might not be so clear because we live in a totally different context.

In biblical times everybody was equally wealthy. They had what can be termed “limited goods”. So if you had more than anyone else, because of a good harvest, then it would have been seen as a blessing from God, which implied that you had to share it with the rest. If you did not share it, you were regarded as a thief and a robber.

So in our parable there is a lot of hidden meaning especially when we look at the grammatical structure of the parable.

I think we also need to move away from the term “rich man”, and rather talk of the “blessed man” because that is closer to WHAT he really was. It is evident in the parable that, from verses 17 to 19, the “blessed man” takes charge of his own life ignoring the fact that God blessed him with an abundant harvest. INSTEAD of thinking of others, instead of sharing his abundant harvest with others, he kept it to himself, thinking more about his future and living comfortably, than the needs of others. So yes, Jesus is right in his evaluation of his conduct: he is a robber and acting very foolishly.

No wonder then that in verse 20 God takes charge and condemns his behaviour. And because of his greed, if he loses his life, everyone else would get a share of what was supposed to be theirs in the first place.

Jesus is making the valid point: God blessed him with a good harvest, not to keep for himself but actually to share it with others. It did not belong to him. It belonged to God and God has the right to take it back if He wants to and give it to others who will make sure those in need gets their fair share.

So what is the message?

Well, anyone and any organisation can be guilty of acting foolishly when they do not share the blessings of God with others. If we as a congregation just want more and more money without sharing it with our communities, we are foolish. If we as a congregation just want more and more money without reaching out to all people, then we are foolish. If we as a congregation want more and more money without giving to national and international charitable causes, then we are foolish. If we as a congregation do not use God’s money to do His mission on this earth and in our communities, then we are foolish.

All we need is enough to do God’s work here in Kirknewton and East Calder for outreach and charitable giving to the wider world. All we need

is to have enough resources to proclaim His Gospel of salvation to all people.

So if all our members give whatever they have from the bottom of their hearts, we as a congregation will have enough money to proclaim God's Kingdom and have enough to give it away to all people in need.

And we need to trust God to do the rest. If we trust God, then we as individuals will not be scared or worried about giving our offerings to the Church, we as a congregation will not be anxious about money for the future, money to keep the congregation going.

So let us all pray about our offerings and pray that we as a congregation will never act foolishly with all the blessings God bestows upon us!

Amen