

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost, July 31, 2022

Luke 12:13-21

13Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.” 14But he said to him, “Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?” 15And he said to them, “Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.” 16Then he told them a parable: “The land of a rich man produced abundantly. 17And he thought to himself, ‘What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?’ 18Then he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 19And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.’ 20But 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?’ 21So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God.”

SERMON-

Shalom—so much more than a ceasefire. Living in harmony with nature is Shalom. Communities living in right relationship, reverence, and compassion—that’s Shalom.

Jesus lives and proclaims shalom—it’s all wrapped in God’s intention to mend all that’s broken.. I love how Pastor Daniel Erlander talks about this in his book *Manna and Mercy*—Friendship with God, friendship with one another, friendship with creation and even friendship with ourselves. Shalom is about interdependence, mutuality and connection.

A younger sib who wants a rabbi to settle his inheritance dispute interrupts Jesus while he shares his vision of Shalom. Today, let the

litigious sibling marinade for a few minutes while we recall God's hopes and dreams for a world living in Shalom.

Pastor Daniel Erlander writes the escaped slaves' prolonged wandering serves as a Wilderness School . The curriculum is love of God and neighbour. The object lesson is food called manna—manna being a word that actually means, “what is it?”

Remember the drill? Collect only what you need for the day and you could collect a bit extra for the day of Sabbath rest. You'd be right to connect manna to our prayers for daily bread. Manna also teaches us that the earth provides and we can share. Many traditional indigenous teachings and hunting and fishing practices align with manna teaching. Take what you truly need and waste as little as possible.

Imagine God's grief when we flunked Manna 101: Some would-be entrepreneurs decide to collect LOTS of manna so they can sell it. Pastor Daniel Erlander writes that the resulting rot and maggots taught the manna lesson that hoarding stinks!

All those interconnections break—our friendships with others, creation, and God—we even become estranged from ourselves. The alternative to Shalom is alienation and isolation.

Now let's rejoin the probate request already in progress....

Rabbis often adjudicated disputes we'd entrust to our law courts. A very long held cultural tradition holds that the oldest son maintains the family assets and is tasked with distributing them. It's no real leap that a younger sib asks Jesus—a rabbi—to intercede. The surprise comes when Jesus doesn't go there. Instead, He tells another one of those mess with your head stories.

Thanks again to the Rev. Dr. Niveen Sarras, a woman who grew up in Palestine. She unpacks the parable telling us that rich people were not the heroes in these stories. Her culture has long held that having great wealth always comes at someone else's expense. Dr. Sarras details how the rich fool puts the scheme to work: While everyone else prays for daily bread, the so called rich fool stockpiles and controls the food supply and its price. Back to "hoarding stinks".

But the real stink comes from the soul—the self.

Listen to the fictive fool's self talk. "I say to my self, self....you have accumulated for yourself....let the good times roll." Nobody —not God, not neighbour— figures into the equation.

If hoarding stinks, imagine the stench of trying to weaponize manna. One nation's international policy contains a plank stating that food is a weapon used as leverage to get other countries to bend to your will. You're thinking "Russia", aren't you? I'm actually quoting from the US Secretary of Agriculture Earl Butz, who served in the Nixon administration in the early 1970's.

So, the rich fool is not an outlier. He has plenty of company being confronted by Jesus' question, "what happens if you gain the whole world only to lose your self..or your soul?"

—the word repeated in the fool's self congratulatory speech 'soul', is the same word the Lord uses telling him that this very night his very soul is required of him. What good are the goodies then?

The World Happiness project's research suggests the extremely wealthy are actually less happy than those who have enough—too much time protecting their manna piles.

Oxfam International released a report in January, revealing that during the pandemic the **10 richest people in the world — all white men** — more than doubled their wealth, from a collective \$700 billion to \$1.5 trillion.”

Oxfam’s report estimates that the 252 richest men now hold more wealth than the 1 billion women and girls living in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean combined.

So who really pays for the bigger barns billionaires build?

Perhaps Jesus knows there’s no winner in the estate dispute he’s asked to adjudicate.

What if Jesus knows that Good News for the poor might mean liberation for everybody—even the uber rich?

What if Jesus’ life, death and resurrection are God’s unwavering commitment to Shalom?