

“A Parable to Live By”

It's been said that the Scriptures teach us – not so much, how to live – but how to die. Here in our text, Jesus gives us a parable to live by. However, we must make a distinction between the life that WE LIVE – and the life which we LIVE BY. “For one's life (the life we LIVE BY) does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”

So, what is this LIFE that we LIVE BY? Well, first of all, let me convince you that you have plenty of this LIFE – and with this LIFE, you are filthy rich ... towards God!

1 Corinthians 3:21 says that “all things belong to you.” 2 Corinthians 6:10 speaks of “having nothing, yet possessing all things.” This is the richness of life which is your because of Jesus Christ. “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, so that through His poverty you might become rich.” (2 Corinthians 8:9)

What would you call someone, who for Jesus' sake, has more forgiveness than they have sin? What would you call someone for whom the mercy of God endures forever? What would you call someone who is gifted with the peace of God that surpasses all human understanding? What would you call someone who doesn't just have grace – but grace upon grace – for Jesus' sake?

Such a person is abundantly rich! And that's who you are in Christ – through Baptism, by His Absolution, with His Body and Blood given to you in His Supper. And yet, even though we are rich – we grasp for fool's gold.

I remember as a young boy living in Hastings walking down the alley – and finding this huge diamond ring perched on top of a trash can. I thought I'd hit the mother lode – imagining how much it must be worth – and what I would do with all that money. It consumed me. I couldn't think of anything else. A fool with his gold.

Such is the Rich Fool in the parable. Earthly things were his treasures. And did you notice that he was a rich man to begin with – and then his land “produced plentifully” – so much so, that he doesn't know how to handle it all.

His possessions had become his god. And notice how he worships his God – how he lives. “MY crops ... MY barns ... MY grain and MY goods.” “Mine, mine, mine” is the liturgy he lives by.

And Christians can find themselves singing the same tune – that’s why Jesus tells us this parable. We are not exempt from the green-eyed monster of greed and covetousness. Jesus is warning us – “take care, and be on your guard.”

Our liturgy quickly morphs into the worship of “something other, something more, something better.” Covetousness IS idolatry – worshipping a false god – as we heard in the Epistle reading.

Our greed and covetousness sings out – mine, mine, mine – and more, more, more. It is a song of praise to ourselves – as if we are the lord of our LIFE – and like all false gods, we’re never satisfied.

You “FOOL! This night your soul is required of you,” Jesus says. Such words make the sinner gasp, and your heart skips a beat.

But there is good news for you, and your soul – your fallen, foolish, self-impooverished soul. What is required of you – is taken up by Jesus. God’s own Son takes on human flesh in order to take on the demands of God’s Law, laid upon your soul – as His very own.

The Son of God is born UNDER the Law – a Law which requires perfect obedience. The Law of God is not like some T-ball coach who is satisfied with you trying your best – like a parent satisfied with your promises to never, ever do that again. The Law of God demands holiness – not only in outward deeds – but with all your words, all your thoughts, all your heart.

Jesus is not like the Rich Fool, like us – thinking that His LIFE comes from possessions – thinking that life is about getting all your STUFF in order – so that you can keep your life, and have rest for your soul.

What God requires of you – Jesus has done “for you.” The suffering, crying, bleeding, and dying that comes to sinful souls like ours – was endured, and completed by Jesus. When His work was done, He didn’t say – “I THINK it is finished” – or, “I HOPE it is finished” – or, “It is MOSTLY finished.” Jesus said, “It IS finished.”

Nothing OTHER – nothing MORE – nothing BETTER – is required. “It IS finished.”

When Jesus had finished paying the debt of our sin (and the whole world’s sin) – God the Father announced His acceptance of Jesus’ sacrifice – by raising Him from death to life.

The resurrected Jesus came forth from that tomb – not breathing out revenge – but forgiveness. He breathed peace into the sinful souls of His disciples who had denied and deserted Him – and then sent them out to preach His repentance and forgiveness – to preach His LIFE – to the ends of the earth.

Jesus Christ breathes His LIFE and PEACE into you. Your LIFE is not “vanity” – empty – a daily toil burdened by the perfect requirements of God’s Law. No, the LIFE that you live BY – is the LIFE that is yours IN Christ Jesus.

Your LIFE is washed in the flood of God’s gracious forgiveness – receiving the very treasures of heaven as you eat and drink the LIVING Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. Dearly beloved, you are abundantly rich – IN Christ Jesus. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.