

“In Pursuit of Happiness, Justice and Peace”  
Luke 10

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*Let us pray: Gracious God, how distracted we are in the minutia of life.  
We are tired, we are overwhelmed, we are confused.  
May your word bring guidance to our hearts and minds this morning.  
In Jesus Christ we pray, AMEN.*

Maya Angelou wrote, “The desire to reach for the stars is ambitious. The desire to reach hearts is wise.”

One may argue that if you are in the business of reaching hearts, you are not making any money. That is a good and accurate statement. If you are not making much money, can you be happy?

Money is such a taboo subject here in North America. This morning, we are going to talk about money, just for a little while.

A new study from the San Francisco Federal Reserve concludes that people who earn less money than their neighbors in affluent neighborhoods are more likely to commit suicide than their counterparts earning the same income in a less wealthy neighborhood.<sup>1</sup>

Princeton University study concluded that once a person makes a salary of \$75,000 a year, any additional income does not lead to increased happiness. Thus, the pursuit of more money, may seem foolish.

In the gospel lesson this morning, Jesus is approached by a young man looking for resolution on an inheritance.

First, Jesus asserts that he is not an arbitrator or a mediator. Hence, he refuses to get involved.

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<sup>1</sup> Mary C. Daly, et al. , *Relative Status and Well-Being Evidence from U.S. Suicidal Data*, San Francisco Federal Reserve, September, 2012

However, Jesus is an opportunist, so sees this as a teaching moment and proceeds to tell a parable of a rich man who had a good year. He was blessed with a good crop. So he was considering what to do with all of his grain. And so he says to himself:

*“I will pull down my barns and build larger ones,  
I will store all of my grain and my goods,  
I will say to my soul: Soul, you have ample goods:  
Relax, eat, drink be merry.”*

God’s answer to his rationale was, “You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?”

This morning, I like to submit that this story does not teach us to abandon our retirement plans or to be financially irresponsible.

This morning, we are confronted with what is of most value to us. You see, the rich man is not considered a fool because he had a good crop.

He is not considered a fool because he saves for the future.

He is considered a fool because in his abundance he did not think of sharing it with others.

He had not thought of thankfulness to God or what God may require of him.

He was oblivious to the fact that life is not promised to us and that our life belongs to God.

He is considered a fool because he put all the value of his life in his possessions.

So, the conversation between Jesus and the hearer turned into a teaching moment about priorities, our own values, and yes, happiness.

Today, it is easy to get entangled into the consumerism and materialism of our time. We are inundated with marketing strategies at every turn.

We are often feeling that we do not have enough; that the more we have, the better we will feel. So, we are pressured to keep up with the Joneses.

New technology challenges us to have the latest model. After we buy the latest phone, the new latest phone is on the market.

Often, we believe that only if our circumstances were different we would be complete. “If I get married, I will be happy.” If I get that important job, I will be secure.” “If I live in that promising neighborhood, I will have peace.”

But, we are challenged this morning to be rich toward God. And what does it mean to be rich toward God? “It means that trusting God enough to share what we have received.”<sup>2</sup>

It is knowing that our self worth it is not defined by our possessions. Being rich toward God leads us to look at each other and love one another as we love our selves.

We pray and we hope for peace. But we continue to hold on to our ways and do not validate the views of our neighbors. Then we pick up our guns and weapons to settle our differences.

Being rich toward God means that we know that justice will come only when we really believe that we are all created equal before God and we all have the same rights.

Happiness comes as a result of how we have lived our lives, not as a result of our material possessions.

Someone once said, “I have heard many different regrets expressed by people nearing the end of life, but there is one regret I have never heard expressed. I have never heard anyone say, ‘I wish I hadn’t given so much away. I wish I had kept more for myself.’”

Justice and peace will come when we look and respect each other as equals regardless of our social economic status, race, gender, or religion.

May we strive to be rich toward God! Amen.

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<sup>2</sup> Richard Bauckman, “Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost, Year C, Luke 12:13-21,” in *Lectionary Commentary: Gospels*, 381.