

Pentecost 8 8/4/19c
St. Luke 12:13-21 13C

TAKE CARE, AND BE ON YOUR GUARD AGAINST ALL COVETOUSNESS, FOR ONE'S LIFE DOES NOT CONSIST IN THE ABUNDANCE OF HIS POSSESSIONS.

He who dies with the most toys ... well, he dies. But, you don't like that. You like "He who dies with the most toys ... WINS!" No one likes to admit it, especially sitting in the church pew, but we have all prayed the title of today's sermon, "Lord, make me rich! Amen." Ok, even if you haven't prayed to be "rich," you've prayed for, you've coveted, that job promotion; that raise in salary your co-worker got; the bigger house your neighbor has; the ability to hit the golf ball farther than your neighbor. And, when you didn't get it, when things didn't turn out the way you wanted them to, you did not rejoice with your neighbor, you were filled with anger and self-pity.

Do you remember the 9th and 10th Commandments? I know, you learned it in German. But, it's the same in German, as it is in English. These two Commandments are all about having a holy heart, free from envy and jealousy; they forbid us from coveting. "Coveting" may be a word we do not use every day, but it is a **SINFUL LONGING** for that which is not yours. And we hear Jesus say to us today, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions (v. 15)." Jesus echoes the Commandments this morning because coveting keeps you from being truly happy and contented.

In six days, God created all things, out of nothing, simply by His Word, and "Behold, it was very good (Ge 1:31)." But now, tragically, sadly, all of life, our bodies, our minds, our stuff is tainted by sin. But, that doesn't

mean it is inherently evil. Stuff is the “daily bread” that God gives for our bodies and life. And, our stuff helps us enjoy the life God has given us.

I’m going to take a wild guess that you have a hot water heater in your home. Am I way off base on that? You have a hot water heater because you have running water in your home. Anyone want to go back to getting a pail of water from the well, or maybe even the river, and heating it on the stove? Anyone?

And you have electricity, that keeps you warm during a winter blizzard and runs your air conditioning to keep you cool in the summer heat. Electricity from clean, beautiful COAL, I would add.

And you ranchers, out making hay. Want to trade your John Deere – your air-conditioned John Deere – for a sickle bar mower pulled by a team of horses?

My Dear Friends in Christ, clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, are all gifts from God. This is one of the reasons God does not want us to steal from our neighbor. Nor, does the Lord our God want us to be jealous or envious. He wants us to have a holy heart filled with contentment at what He has given us.

Stuff, material goods, is, in and of itself, is not bad. The problem for us is our sinful, covetous hearts.

Look at the man in our parable this morning -- "my crops," "my barns," "my grain," "my goods." This rich fool mentions himself 12 times in this short parable. By his thinking, everything was his and everything -- even his future -- depended on him. He staked his security, including his eternal security, on himself. But in the end, his "gods" were unable to deliver. He lost everything. That was his folly: he centered his life on goods instead of God. His hoped-for ease and joy was totally materialistic.

He most certainly had his daily bread; he was not suffering want, but he wanted more, more, more. Because we are temporal, we are attracted to temporal stuff

Do you recall God's words to Adam in the Garden? Everything that God had created was there to serve Adam, so the Creator gave him a simple command, "Subdue it (Ge 1:28)." Adam was to have dominion over all of the world God had created. But instead of subduing what God has entrusted to us and being master of it, we allow our money and stuff to be our masters and we find ourselves enslaved to them. This is the very issue before us this morning.

Far too often our attitude is the same as that of the rich fool, "Eat, drink, and be merry." And we justify it, "Eat, drink, and be merry ... for tomorrow we DIE". Far too often we live only for the pleasure of the moment, the here and now. And, if you hurt your neighbor, what is that to you?

You are angry at your neighbor – the "why" doesn't matter – you're just angry, so you gossip, you defame and discredit your neighbor. Like toothpaste once it's out of the tube, once your good name and reputation are destroyed, how do you get it back?

God has you a wife, a helpmate, but you are not content. So, you engage in that secret affair, no one will ever know about, right? And if in the end, you hurt your wife, your children, so what; you got what you wanted. And furthermore, if your behavior results in pregnancy, that life can be ended in abortion because that is what is best for you. Well, eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow you may die, right!

I may live well beyond my means and accumulate a great deal of debt that I can't even begin to pay back. So, the retailer that I owe money

to may have to raise their prices to cover their loss. The bank may have to charge more for interest on loans to cover their loss. Everybody is affected and everybody pays because I want to have my toys and live for the pleasure of the moment and it's always – always – about ME!

You know who wasn't all about the ME? Do you know who set His mind on things above? Jesus. He was content to do His Father's will, even when that will meant humbling Himself to be born of a virgin and taking on human flesh and bone. Upon His human frame, He took on all of your sins – including your sin of loving money and stuff more than God; your sin of seeking happiness and security in barns and bigger barns; your sins of jealousy, envy, and hoarding – and He carried them all to the cross. There, He entrusted Himself totally and fully to the Father's will, knowing that His death was the Father's will. And because the Son did the Father's will on that cross, the GOOD NEWS, for you, Dear Child of God, is that you are forgiven all your sins. And the Son rose to life again the 3rd day to bring you that forgiveness, and life, and salvation

In the new birth of your Baptism, you have died to sin, including the sin of coveting, and been raised to live a new life in Christ, to be Christ to our neighbor. And, my Dear Friends in Christ, how fortunate and blessed I was to display a living witness of that this past week.

As I am certain you are aware, Evan has been hospitalized since his accident, and Jonathan and Michelle have been at his bedside with him, which means their farm work is not getting done. So, Jodi put out the call for volunteers and Tuesday, so many folks, with the love of Christ in their hearts compelling them, turned out that about 300 acres of hay was cut and raked and about 850 bales were made in ONE day! Here they were, using their stuff – all that they had a trust from God – their tractors, their balers,

rakes, fuel, time...to serve their neighbor. And I would add to that, there is truth to the old adage, "make hay when the sun shines,"; they served their neighbor in need, when they all had their own work to do.

Dear Saints of God, this is the life that we are called to live in Christ. Not a life of coveting, discontentment, bitterness, self-pity, especially over money and earthly stuff. We have died to all of that in the waters of our baptism. We live in Christ, praising the thanking God for all the stuff that He has given us for our bodies and life, and using that stuff to help and serve our neighbor, just as Christ used His very life to serve us.