

Sermon Sparkler for the Eighth Sunday After Pentecost

This week's lesson begins with a greedy question, but ends with a deep answer. One of the things we find Jesus loathe to do is insert himself in family squabbles (for example the one between Mary and Martha). Today he is presented with another such squabble, and responds with redirection. He warns against greed, but doesn't stop there, instead panning out to a wider observation, "This is about life! For crying out loud, if you're cutting up an inheritance that likely means someone you love died. You've just lost your father, and you might lose your brother if you fight over stuff... if you become possessed by your possessions."

Then Jesus elevates this tension between material gain and the totality of life (I can't help but remember a scene from Al Gore's "An Inconvenient Truth" where he shows a slide of a scale. On one side are gold bars, on the other the earth itself... that's the ridiculous tension Jesus set up) by telling a parable.

"Look at this utterly self-centered man," he begins. And just look at how many Himself, Is, and Souls are in these 6 verses! I count 14 self-references!

The self-satisfied man says, "Eat, drink and be merry," forgetting that this quote from Ecclesiastes ends, "for tomorrow we die."

Jesus answers the original question back in verse 13, by saying, "You fool! If today you die, what will that inheritance be worth?"

And he ends this parable with nothing less than the meaning of life, be rich toward God, not toward Mammon.

- ✎ How can you get those who need to hear today's message to identify with the Man on some level, without calling them a fool? In other words, how can you get them to hear this admonition as coming from Jesus, not you?
- ✎ Maybe try walking yourself through the story first, preach to yourself first so you can preach to your congregation in a way they'll hear it!
- ✎ What would happen to your town if Jesus' admonition was taken seriously? To New Jersey? To America? To the World as a whole?
- ✎ How is this focus good news? What local examples can you think of relationships being built and divides being bridged once Mammon was no longer the focus of the relationship?