



(Year C) Luke 12:13-21

13 A man in the crowd said to Jesus, ‘Master, tell my brother to give me a share of our inheritance.’ 14 ‘My friend,’ he replied, ‘who appointed me your judge, or the arbitrator of your claims?’ 15 Then he said to them, ‘Watch, and be on your guard against avarice of any kind, for a man’s life is not made secure by what he owns, even when he has more than he needs.’

16 Then he told them a parable: ‘There was once a rich man who, having had a good harvest from his land, 17 thought to himself, “What am I to do? I have not enough room to store my crops.” 18 Then he said, “This is what I will do: I will pull down my barns and build bigger ones, and store all my grain and my goods in them, 19 and I will say to my soul: My soul, you have plenty of good things laid by for many years to come; take things easy, eat, drink, have a good time.” 20 But God said to him, “Fool! This very night the demand will be made for your soul; and this hoard of yours, whose will it be then?” 21 So it is when a man stores up treasure for himself in place of making himself rich in the sight of God.’

Other readings: Ecclesiastes 1:2; 2:21-23 Psalm 89 (90) Colossians 3:1-5,9-11

One of this evangelist’s major interests is the teaching of Jesus about riches and poverty. The parable of the rich fool, which illustrates the corrupting influence and foolishness of wealth, is found only in the Gospel of Luke. It is provoked by the question of a man who is anxious to get his hands on his inheritance.

The warning of Jesus is against ‘avarice’. The Greek word *pleonexia* means literally the craving for more. Possessions do not guarantee life. In the parable the rich man has no consideration for the needs of others, despite the fact that he has more than he could ever need. This parable recalls Jesus’ words earlier in the gospel, when he declared the poor blessed, and the rich cursed (Luke 6).

>God calls the rich man ‘Fool!’ reminding us that the gospel is the ultimate answer to the human search for wisdom. Rejection of it is rejection of the true path to God and to life. Fulness of life comes not from possessions, which are, in the words of Ecclesiastes, ‘vanity of vanities’, but from the discovery of the trustworthy God of the poor.

The lesson in each of today’s Scripture readings is of enormous relevance to the world of today, both developed and developing, in which desperate poverty is so often found alongside extraordinary wastefulness and extravagance. In the reading from the Letter to the Colossians St Paul describes greed as ‘worshipping a false god’.

Do I allow the craving for more to control my life or my decisions?

In what sense do those who ask always receive?

We pray for those who are trapped by their own addictions and desires.

We pray for the gift of true freedom.

