

A Barn Fool
Luke 12:13-21

What a fool . . . Jesus, that is . . . what a fool. I mean, why did he bother calling twelve disciples? Why bother calling disciples at all? It wasn't as if he needed help or anything! He was the Son of God, after-all . . . God walking around on earth. And, if he really felt he wanted disciples was chose *those* twelve! Twelve dead-weights that he dragged along behind him! That surely wasn't one his brightest decisions. He'd have been better going it alone, surely! With his skills and talents . . . he could have done great things!

What a fool . . . really . . . what was with him going out of his way to hang out with 'those' people . . . you know what I mean, don't you? 'Those' people! They're a bit odd . . . a bit smelly . . . a bit uneducated . . . a bit shabby . . . a bit suspect . . . and, yet, he surrounded himself with them! Why not just stick to his own? That makes more sense to us, doesn't it? He was so gifted . . . such a great speaker . . . and teacher . . . and he wastes it all on them! He chose to share his life with them! Was that really the best use of the Son of God's time?

What a fool! He took the precious things of God and shared them with sinners . . . with the unclean . . . with the unholy. Forgiving them . . . healing them . . . restoring them . . . treating them as if they were the chosen ones . . . as if they were the righteous ones . . . as if they were the deserving ones! Making them like us! Like *us*! Didn't he know there were rules for a reason . . . and processes . . . and a right way of doing things. He was just making things hard for himself . . . and, who wants that?

No wonder they called him a fool . . . the religious people . . . the good people . . . the knowledgeable people. He was a crazy fool . . . a dangerous fool. He had it all before him . . . he had it made . . . but, he gave it all away! No wonder they laughed at him hanging there on the cross . . . claiming to be God's Son! What a fool! Even there . . . even *then* . . . thinking not about himself . . . thinking about connecting with others . . . promising an audience with God to the thief hanging beside him! Even then, thinking about drawing people together . . . placing his mother in the care of a disciple . . . almost as if it was that that was most important to him! Almost as if that was his purpose . . . the Son of God . . . almost as if that was what life is about.

They laughed and mocked and called him a fool . . . but, God did not . . . God did not call this man a fool. God said: "This is my Son . . . my beloved . . . listen to him"! Listen to him . . . when he speaks about God . . . listen to him, when he speaks *for* God . . . listen to him when he speaks as God . . . listen to him when he tells a parable . . . a story . . . about another man . . . another man who had everything . . . another man who had the precious things of God . . . another man who we are inclined to admire and envy, but who God calls a fool!

A rich man's land produced abundantly. Good for him, hey? No problems there . . . whether it was hard work, good management, or just sheer good luck, it doesn't matter . . . in life, it can happen all those ways, can't it. Even today we would say he was blessed. And, what a great problem to have . . . not enough space to store the grain . . . this must have been some harvest for a rich bloke to have run out of space! So, he problem-solves and makes a prudent decision . . . a sensible decision . . . it's a bit over the top – tearing down the old barns and building new ones – but, hey, if he's got the money, why not? So far, so good . . . and I can imagine, in another parable, Jesus praising this man's wisdom! But, not here . . . not in this story . . . in this story God breaks in and says: "You fool!"

Why is he a fool? It's not because he's rich . . . it's not because he's built bigger barns to store the abundant crop . . . I'd even go as far as to say it's not even because he's greedy! He's a fool because he has a little chat to himself . . . about life . . . you know those little chats you have to yourself? You make plans . . . you have dreams about what life is going to be like. The trouble is, this rich man's chat to himself is dominated by three words: I, me, and mine.

I . . . me . . . mine. I will do this . . . my barns . . . my grain . . . my goods . . . it's all mine . . . I don't need anything else now . . . I don't need anyone else, now . . . I am set . . . I can look after myself . . . this is what life is about . . . it's about me!

I, me, mine. That's the total opposite of God's life. Everything about God is directed towards relationship and community. God's whole being . . . God's whole life . . . is about relationship and community. That is life as God sees it . . . and God sees all life . . . God brings all life into being. Even though God doesn't need more community . . . God is perfectly okay within himself, still God forms new community . . . new relationships . . . because that's where life is . . . that's why life is about.

I reminded of another story where God said to another man: "It's not good for the man to be alone". But, as I recall it he didn't go on to say: "I'll provide him with bigger barns, more crops, more stuff . . . that'll do it . . . that'll make it good for him"! No, he said: "I will make him a helper as his partner". I will give him community. That's why the rich man is a fool. You can't have a community of one. In some ways the rich man was right . . . he probably didn't need anything, or anyone, else . . . he could have managed on his own . . . maybe he could even have been happy, but, still, he was a fool . . . not just because he was going to die that night and would miss out on life, but also because by cutting everyone – including God – out of the picture, he was *already* missing out on life . . . the fullness of life that is found only in community . . . in sharing life with other people.

"Be on your guard," Jesus says, "One's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions". It's an apt reminder to us too . . . our material wealth, as good and nice as it is, can so easily make us inward looking . . . and, how quickly our inner dialogue turns to 'I, me, mine'!

Which is why, this morning . . . and every Sunday morning God, the Holy Spirit, gathers people in community . . . communities like this one . . . which is hardly perfect . . . more like a bunch of fools trying not to look foolish! But, this is a community where everyone is truly welcome, no matter who they are . . . and, that's not because *we* choose who's in and out, it's because *Jesus* invites them . . . that can be a challenge, can't it? But, God knows life is found here . . . life in all its complexity, and challenge, and fullness, and beautiful ambiguity.

This is where we get to practice saying: "It's not about me". This is where God's rich abundance is shared with us . . . where God's life is given to us . . . not in extravagant material possessions, but in ordinary things like bread and wine . . . where Jesus says: "It is not good for you to be alone . . . here I am for you . . . take me with you . . . as you go from here . . . out into community . . . that's where life is to be found . . . let's go together".

Amen.

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