

Sermon for Proper 13C  
Sunday, July 31, 2022  
“Stop chasing after wind”

Texts: Ecclesiastes 1:2, 12-14; 2:18-23; Colossians 3:1-11; Luke 12:13-21

I speak to you in the name of the one true God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

At the beginning of today’s short gospel reading, there is someone in a crowd who asked Jesus to tell his brother to share his inheritance with him. Jesus has been talking for some time in this section of Luke’s Gospel about setting one’s mind on the eternal, on things that will not pass away, on strengthening one’s relationship with God, but this individual in the crowd is so consumed by getting his fair share that Jesus’s words seem to go in one ear and out the other. All he can think about is his inheritance, so when there is the slightest break in Jesus’s speech, he jumps in and asks Jesus to help him get his inheritance. Vanity of vanities, a chasing after wind. But Jesus quickly reminded him that he needs to get his priorities straight. Jesus quickly reminds him that collecting all the wealth in the world will be of no use when his life is demanded of him; when he returns to God, what kind of relationship will he have to show for it? Just like the man in the Parable of the Rich Fool, treasures on earth are useless if one has not stored up treasures in heaven. Material things don’t last. Our lives can change dramatically in an instant. Tragedy can befall us at any time. We must pay less attention to the things that are temporal and hold on to the things that are eternal. We need to store up treasures in heaven.

Just what are the treasures of heaven anyway? What makes us rich toward God? Well, maintaining and strengthening our relationship with God. Strengthening our relationships with one another. Looking after and taking care of each other, while we keep in mind our dependence on God for everything. Immediately following today’s gospel lesson, Jesus said something very important. Jesus explained that “it is [the] Father’s good pleasure to give [us] the kingdom” when he said to his disciples:

“do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? If then you are not able to do so small a thing as that, why do you worry about the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith!”

We need to focus on our relationship with God and confide in him, because God will take care of us, just as he takes care of the rest of his creation.

We tend to worry about how we're going to keep our money, support ourselves and our families, feel safe and protected, stay healthy, and maintain our relatively comfortable lives—or at least how we can make our lives better in some way. Now that doesn't mean that we shouldn't care about what's happening; that doesn't mean that we shouldn't enjoy worldly goods or pleasures in life. No, that's not what I think Jesus would have told us at all. But, what he is trying to teach is that if we let worldly matters consume our thoughts, minds, hearts, and actions, it's like chasing after wind. At some point, we simply should to give our lives over to God and let him work his purpose out in the midst of life's chaos. That's what he does; that's what he wants us to do.

Jesus also tells his disciples to go out and sell all that they have, give to the poor, and prepare themselves for the coming of God's Kingdom. Well, that's impractical for most of us; selling everything we have just isn't an option. But what *is* an option is that we remember that we're all in this together. That is what Paul was getting at in his letter to the Colossians, which was our epistle lesson for today: "Put to death whatever is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry)...Get rid of...anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your mouth." Those things are selfish motives and serve to help no one, not even the self. In other words, we should do all that we can to lift each other up in whatever way we can or are called on to do. Sometimes that means financial help, sometimes that involves physical labor or demands of our time, sometimes it means simply being a listening ear, sometimes it means rejoicing in each other's victories, sometimes it means sharing each other's grief. But we are supposed to relate to each other in community; it's how we humans are hot wired up here. Long before there was Holy Scripture or religious tradition to remind us, the human species has lived in community, perhaps it was small—just members of one's kin—but it was community, nonetheless. When we let go of making it all about me—of making the self the center of the universe—then we can be open to making it all about us and open to letting God be at the center.

We must not let worldly things consume us or take all of our attention. We must not let the demands of the world worry us. God takes care of the birds of the air and the beasts of the field, and he will take care of us. As for our part in all this, we can lay aside our vanity; we can turn away from focusing on the self and strive to bring God's kingdom about here on earth. We can show the world that there is more to life than chasing after wind. Amen.

#### Resources

"Commentary on Luke 12:13-21," [http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=2923](http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2923)