

Sermon 26

St Philip and St James
Palma de Mallorca Spain
31th July 2022
Trinity 7

**Theme: Remembering God and our
neighbour in Our Success Narrative .**



TEXT: Luke 12:13-21

Introduction

Money can have a curious grip on us. A craving for stuff can distort priorities and leave us with an insatiable desire for more. Once upon a time, there lived a King who, despite his luxurious lifestyle, was neither happy nor content. One day, he came upon a servant who was singing happily while he worked. This fascinated the King; why was he, the Supreme Ruler of the Kingdom, unhappy and gloomy, while a lowly servant was so joyous. The King asked the servant, 'Why are you so happy?' The man replied, 'Your Majesty, I am nothing but a servant, but my family and I don't need too much -- just a roof over our heads and warm food to fill our tummies.' The king was not satisfied with that reply. Later in the day, he sought the advice of his most trusted advisor. After hearing the King's woes and the servant's story, the advisor said, 'Your Majesty, I believe that the servant has not been made part of The 99 Club.' 'The 99 Club? And what exactly is that?' the King inquired. The advisor replied, 'Your Majesty, to truly know what The 99 Club is, let's place 99 Gold coins in a bag and leave it at this servant's doorstep.' Next day when the servant saw the bag, he picked it up and took it in. When he opened the bag, he let out a great shout of joy... So many gold coins! He began to count them. After several counts, he was at last convinced that there were 99 coins. 'What could've happened to that last gold coin? Surely, no one

would leave 99 coins!' he wondered. He looked everywhere he could, but that final coin was elusive. Finally, exhausted, he decided that he would have to work harder than ever to earn that gold coin and complete his collection. And from that day, the servant's life was changed. He was overworked, horribly grumpy, and castigated his family for not helping him make that 100th coin. He stopped singing while he worked. Witnessing this drastic transformation, the King was puzzled. When he sought his advisor's help, the advisor said, 'Your Majesty, the servant has now officially joined The 99 Club...' He continued, 'The 99 Club is a name given to those people who have enough to be happy but never satisfied, because they are always yearning and striving for that extra one, telling themselves: 'Let me get that one final thing and then I will be happy for life.'

Exegesis of the Text

At the least rich fool is a little bit different because he was satisfied with what he had worked for and now it was time to relax, eat, drink, and merry. Today's parable is triggered by the request by someone in the crowd, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me." It is interesting that Jesus is busy teaching his disciples about the Kingdom of God while someone is thinking about earthly wealth. Jesus' response to the request is fascinating, "Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?" He then shifted his focus and addresses the crowd against all kinds of greediness. This is the context we read the parable of the rich man.

The parable is self-explanatory especially in the conclusion, "so it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God. Why this rich man is called a fool? In the contemporary society such a man is a role model for the society. Why? First he worked very hard. It takes a lot of hardworking to manage a farm and its workers and ultimately to produce a bumper harvest. Second, he was a good planner. Again, it takes a good planner to have a bumper harvest and invest for the future. Therefore, what had gone wrong with this man?

First, if all the granaries were to be torn down and build new ones, it implies that the size of the harvest was well beyond expectation. This means there was an invisible hand involved in his harvest; in this case that invisible hand was God. Building larger granaries represent an attempt to acquire security for the future and relaxed lifestyle in present. What we see in the rich man is self-praise and no mention of God in his success narrative.

Second, he remembered two things only: himself and the world. In the whole story, the rich man forgets three important things; neighbour, time and God. The rich man behaved as if there was no God. He was therefore a fool in the understanding of Psalm 14: 1, “the fool says in his heart there is no God.” In the Israelite understanding, wealth was meant to be used to ministering to the poor. The rich man forgot about that stewardship aspect. He sought security in the material wealth but he forgot about the security for his soul. God then said to him let me plug off my oxygen plug in you and see what will happen to all to the material wealth you have stored up for yourself.

Application

The problem of the rich man was not hardworking and acquiring wealth but living a selfish life divorced from the neighbour and God. We live in a world of extremes where some are filthy rich and having sleepless nights searching for the 100th coin while others are languishing in abject poverty. There is nothing wrong with working hard and acquire wealth but there is everything wrong with forgetting God in your life. We have become worshippers of our assets and there is no place of God in our hearts. We have become self-centered as if there is no existence of a neighbour in need. I come from a continent where millions of people are dying of poverty and primitive diseases while billions of dollars by illegal means are staked in people's houses. I still remember three years ago there was a young man who would have all-white parties every week with his friends from Friday night to Monday morning. He died by road accident returning home from one of these parties and upon searching his house they found 85 million USA Dollars in his house. These are the realities we find ourselves in. Therefore, the poverty we find in Africa is not about lack of resources otherwise it is one of the richest continents in natural resources but the problem lies in self-centeredness and improper management of God's resources. Blessed are those who remember God and neighbours in their success narrative.

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