

Trinity 13 (2013)

Luke 12

New International Version (NIV)

¹³ Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”

¹⁴ Jesus replied, “Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?” ¹⁵ Then he said to them, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.”

¹⁶ And he told them this parable: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. ¹⁷ He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’

¹⁸ “Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. ¹⁹ And I’ll say to myself, “You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.”’

²⁰ “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’

²¹ “This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.”

It's the same the whole world over
It's the poor wot gets the blame
And the rich wot get's the pleasure
Ain't it all.....

I was on a funeral visit a couple of weeks ago
When the gentleman's grief got the better of him
he instantly apologised for his language in front of a vicar

he seemed quite surprised
that having spent my previous life in the motor trade
I was not that easily shocked or offended

I'm told I'm very good with people from all walks of life
And I think it's because I'm a bit like St Paul
"all things to all people"

I've been to garden parties at the Palace
(Buckingham and Wells)
and I've worked on the shop floor

The handful of upper-class people I've known
I've found to be genuinely nice people
Fair, honest and certainly not snooty
as often portrayed on stage or screen

they're not at all bothered about fashion
usually wearing the same old Barbour jacket & wellies
for 40 years or so

and they're definitely not the least worried
about having the latest flashy car
it's more likely to be 50-60 year old Land Rover
with original mud and canvas top flapping in the breeze

they're not that precious about their land either
as long as you're not a poacher

It's a long story
But my brother Graham has a tree planted in his memory
In the grounds of a stately home nearly Aylesbury

And the owner,
who's quite happy to be addressed by his Christian name
has told us we're welcome into his grounds any time

without appointment, to go and pay our respects

At the other end of the scale you have the working class
Mostly happy-go-lucky people
Accepting of their lot
and dreaming of winning the lotto one day
But knowing full well that's never going to happen
So let's just live life and be happy

As Bob Dylan once sang
"when you ain't got nothin, you got nothin to lose"

It's the middle classes
The Mrs Buckets (sorry, Bouquets) of the world
that worry me the most
and I know I'm not going to offend anyone by saying it
because most people won't admit
to being middle-class anyway!

I've already been warned
that when we go on our cruise in September
we'll hear lots of name dropping going on
names like "Cunard" and "Windsor" and "Lady Penelope"

people who are not happy where they are
have ideas above their station
people like the man who addresses Jesus
in our gospel reading this morning?

Only a couple of weeks ago I compared Jesus with Oddball
The hippy like tank driver in the film Kelly's Heroes
"Like – chill man – Dad has everything in control!"

And I quoted this passage
Or at least what comes right at the end of this passage
If only the lectionary would allow it
So let me put that right now

²² Then Jesus said to his disciples: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. ²³ For life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. ²⁴ Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds!
²⁵ Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life? ²⁶ Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?"

Now - if I quote Bishop Tom Wright's
summary of this whole passage
that'll be it – sermon over – we can all go home
but just in case you feel short-changed, I'll pad it out a little!

Here's Tom Wright (p153)

The point Jesus is making here, is the key to the entire gospel
that God the Almighty
the Alpha & Omega,
the creator of all that is – seen and unseen
the mighty, all knowing all seeing ever-present Deity
is SOVEREIGN
Lord of all He surveys
and He loves you
little old you

in the greater scheme of all things
not that much bigger than a sparrow
and yet the creator and sustainer of all being
LOVES you – personally
And He will give you whatever you need

And once the penny drops,
and we get this through our thick skulls
we will chill, stop striving,
and start thinking of everyone else
So is that it?
Sermon over?
Well – not quite

You see – there would seem to be a bit of a conflict here
Between Luke's gospel and Paul's letter to the Colossians

in the gospel Jesus is telling us to chill
stop striving and beating ourselves – and others up
over things we can't have
and there's Paul, urging us to "Set our minds on things above"

I hope and pray you're not getting the two confused
Paul isn't encouraging the Colossians to seek better things
But to better themselves

Luke and Paul are not at odds
They're both saying the same thing

And the clue is in verse 5 of Paul's letter

⁵ Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed

I must admit,

I only learned recently that lust is not just about sex
You can lust after a Knickerbocker Glory or a Cornish Pasty
Just as much as you can after Brad Pitt or Angelina Joely
(When you reach a certain age there's no contest)

I'd like to think
that the majority of us have the rest of Paul's list sorted
but "lust" is the catch-all clause Paul slips in there
just in case anyone thinks
they're in control of their earthly nature!

Some people lust after drugs or alcohol
Some lust after power – or class or status

Lust can cause us to fear
That by the time we get to the front of the queue
All the best's been taken

So we grab and snatch and claw ourselves to the front
Come to think about it

Lust is probably what drove this young man
To demand Jesus order his brother
to divide his inheritance with him

and it's lust – things of the flesh - we need to rise above
not class or power or status

God wants us to raise our game
raise our standards
and raise our eyes to the one who rose above it all

"seek first the kingdom, and all these things shall be added to you"

amen