

Pastor Roy's sermon from July 31, 2016

Two brothers want more of the family inheritance for themselves and miss out on the chance of a rich, ongoing relationship. Here is an opportunity for Jesus to tell a story. A story of a farmer who thinks mainly about himself when he has an amazing harvest. He thinks, how can I keep all this food for myself, to provide sustenance for the rest of my life? After I build bigger barns, then I will be able to insure that I will have plenty to eat and drink, and I will be happy. Nowhere in his calculations does anyone else factor in. He only cares about himself. Surrounded by happy expectations, he dies that night in his sleep and it all comes to naught. Clearly, in the end he is a fool, for nothing which he valued produces joy for him. His values are misplaced. He is bankrupt of peace. Joy and peace lived in his future plans, in his head. His hope was in his own provision alone. But he never learned to love, or share, or invest in others. Just himself. He dies, alone. How tragic!

Imagine Jesus turning to the brothers with a questioning look. A pause. His story begs the question, what is more important, your big inheritance, or your chance to love and have the support of your family? Being self-sufficient, or having good relationships?

And what does it mean to be rich toward God? Does God need our stuff, our money, our generosity? Clearly not. Our neighbors do, the poor do.

But is this parable about possessions and money? Or is it about relationships? With whom do we share our lives? Do we at times get distracted from what is really important?

Oh, I need to do one more thing, before I make that phone call, before I set aside some moments for that friend, neighbor, or family member.

Do I offer myself in relationship? Or do I allow fears and anxieties and the day to day passing weariness to push me to set aside life giving relationships for superficial, passing, unimportant things.

The writer of Colossians reminds us of the same thing. Part of hiding ourselves in God, in Christ, is giving ourselves over to relationships of love. When we so live, we are living in the image of the creator who creates us all to live in a web of relationships.

Part of what we call sin is when we prefer ourselves over others—resulting in broken relationships. But often sin is unintentional, a reaction to fear, anxiety, uncertainty. Like the farmer who planned to keep all of his produce for himself, rather than share his abundance with those who needed it. Like both brothers who valued inheritance over a true relationship with his brother.

Vanity of Vanities. Folly of follies. What is most important? What does it mean to be rich toward God? What does it mean to be raised with Christ to live into what is most important in our lives, in creation.

Where do we place our priorities? What is our purpose? From time to time it is helpful to take stock of our priorities. Are they aligned with our goals, hopes, and dreams?

The Spirit of Christ is to be mindful of our relationships. Are we tending them with love and mercy? Are we taking time to enjoy the people and creatures around us rather than things and thoughts for the future? Let us be mindful so that we might live lives of wisdom and mercy rather than folly. Amen.