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St Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th St. SW
Austin, MN, 55912-1749

Pastor Ted Barthels
sermon preached on-
July 28, 2013
11th Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture Lessons: Ecclesiastes 1:2, 2:18-26; Colossians 3:1-11
Hymns: 39; 347; 430:1-4; 430:8 (26:1-3)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord
and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Luke 12:13-21

13 Then one from the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." 14 But He said to him, "Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?" 15 And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses."

16 Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. 17 And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' 18 So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.'" 20 But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?'

21 "So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." (NKJV)

This is the Word of God!

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, dear fellow Redeemed

INTRO: -Living a Secure Life.

There is a great deal of talk about security in America today, and most of it is political, but many people feel it personally, because many feel rather insecure. We talk about security on so many different levels. It is the government's responsibility to have a national defense program to keep us safe and secure. There is discussion about having secure borders with a new immigration policy. We have all been brought up with the idea that when we retire we will be collecting "social security." Many here today are already receiving their monthly checks from the US treasury, or will be in the not too distant future. Of course the national economy comes into the conversation and there is a great deal of disagreement about what policies the government should have to make life more secure for middle class and poor Americans.

We do well to take the psalmists position, "**Do not put your trust in princes**" (Psalm 146:3). Their power is very limited, and they are after all only mortal. So what is the alternative? Is it what people have been doing for many thousands of years? People naturally put their trust in their **wealth**. So it is that the Lord Jesus would teach us an important lesson about -

Theme: Possessing Wealth for a Secure Life.

When we talk about wealth our minds quickly think of the material, and not just cars and homes, but investment portfolios, and banks accounts and insurance policies. Jesus taught us that if security is found in wealth it is -

I. Not the Wealth found in the Abundance of Possessions.

Jesus was in the middle of teaching a series of lessons to the crowd that was gathered before him when a young man who had made his way to the front broke in and interrupted the Lord. He

acknowledged Jesus' authority as a teacher and sought to bring that authority to bear upon his brother, who supposedly had wronged this young man in connection with the family inheritance. This matter was in the forefront of this young man's mind. It was consuming his thoughts and emotions. He wanted justice. He came to Jesus. Why shouldn't he come to Jesus? Wouldn't we go to Jesus if we felt someone had wronged us? As Lord and God isn't Jesus the one who should bring justice into the world?

The problem wasn't that the young man had brought his troubles to the Lord in prayer, it was that he failed to recognize Jesus' mission on earth. Yes, He is our Lord. He is our Lord because He is our Redeemer. He does bring judgment and justice into the world. First and foremost Jesus brings spiritual judgment and justice into the world. Jesus addresses sin and the judgment it demands. Jesus secures justice before God for all who are lost and condemned sinners. This is what Jesus is about. This man's request for Jesus to intervene in a dispute about the division of a family inheritance diminished Jesus and His mission of salvation. It is not to say that our Lord condones cheating others in material matters. Jesus does not condone any sin. He calls for repentance from all sinners, and that means that all should turn away from sin and deal with their fellow man, including their families, in love. But calling upon Jesus to pick sides, and establish social and economic justice at the expense of the proclamation of the gospel, that diminishes who Jesus is.

Jesus saw a real problem in the heart of this young man, one that was not unique to this individual. He saw the greed, the avarice, the covetousness that is found in our sinful human nature. This is why Jesus warned: **“Take heed and beware of covetousness!”**

Covetousness comes so easily. We see what material goods others have, and somehow in our eyes it diminishes the blessings God has given us. The world only encourages this. We are told that we deserve the good things in life, a nicer home, a newer car, finer clothing, and **fun**, with lots and lots of toys: WE aren't talking about children's toys, but maybe a camper, or motorcycle, or fishing boat, or golf clubs, or a big flat screen

TV, or the newest game system. We may deny ourselves a lot of the excesses of the world, but then that green monster of envy creeps up on us, and we know we not only want these things we see in the world, we feel that we need them, and we should have them.

Covetousness can become so tricky because it often distorts our view of how things really are. People caught up in covetousness may simply take what they want, actually believing that it is theirs as much as it is the other persons! We forget that **“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning”** (James 1:17). God is fair and even handed in blessing us according to His will for us, knowing (better than we do) what is good for us.

However, we live in a material world in which people find fulfillment in getting more and more stuff until our homes are literally overflowing with stuff. Television has had shows for many years where the homes of the rich and famous are displayed, where sports and entertainment celebrities can show off their “cribs” and how fancy and good life is for them. Too many lose sight of the point Jesus presented with the parable that day.

Luke 12:17“Ones’ life **does not** consist in the abundance of the things which he possesses.”

In that parable the rich farmer had a great bountiful crop, bringing in so much at harvest that he had to build bigger barns or granaries to store all that he had. Instead of simply praising God for the bountiful blessings in his life, he found his security in that sudden wealth. He thought that he was set for life, that it was time for him to take his ease, eat, drink and be merry! He failed to remember the simplest lesson of all when it comes to material goods, **“You can’t take it with you!”** The rich farmer in the parable received a shocking notice that very same night, **“This night your soul is required of you!”** The goods that he had did him no good!

People can fight and scramble, and work their fingers to the bone trying to get ahead in this life, but in the end – **in the end** – what does it get you? Nothing! And then the Lord’s next question – Who gets all your stuff, all those possessions that were so precious to you? Someone who didn’t work for it. Someone who doesn’t really care about your things. Solomon in our Old Testament lesson saw this as the ultimate vanity of riches! They will end up being another’s and not yours.

What the world sees as the “having it made,” isn’t the wealth that brings you a secure life. Indeed there is nothing more tragic than to be materially rich, but spiritually bankrupt!

Possessing Wealth for a Secure Life is - II. The Wealth Found by Being Rich Toward God.

What was Jesus talking about here? Let’s start by recalling what he taught in the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 6:19-21 “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

This passage reminds us that the things of this world are passing away. They are temporary at best. People can steal them away from us. However, the things that await us in heaven are truly permanent. Lay up treasures in heaven; they remain yours forever. No one can take away what Christ has reserved for us in heaven. So how does this direct my life? Again we return to Jesus’ lesson in the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 16: 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

Seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness. The kingdom of God is the rule of God’s grace in your hearts. His righteousness is the key. God provides the righteousness necessary to possess true security for this life and the life to

come. He provides this righteousness in Jesus' holy life, and in His innocent sufferings and death. So then we are secure in our relationship with God. Our souls are secure in Jesus.

Security is linked. These things we need for this life will be provided. That is the Lord's promise. We need not be obsessed by them or even distracted by them. Our focus is to remain on heaven. We read in our epistle lesson this morning.

Colossians 3:1-4 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

Were you raised with Christ? Of course you were raised with Christ! You were "buried with *Christ* in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God" (Colossians 2:12). Christ is the real wealth that brings us security for life. Right now the security of eternal life is ours through faith. This is our hope! We don't say "hope" because of any uncertainty that this is what is ours, but only because we don't yet see the glory, but that glory awaits us. When Christ appears we shall live in that glory. Peter also writes that this is –

1 Peter 1:3-5 "a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

That's rich. This treasure is there for us in the gospel. As we mine the Word and dig ever deeper into the riches of the Gospel we will grow in our sense of security. We will become ever more certain of that which Christ has already made certain, for we will be rich towards God because of the treasure that is ours in Christ. **By the grace of God in Christ we do indeed possess wealth for a secure life both here in time and hereafter in eternity.**

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.