

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost, Year C

OUT OF HOCK, TAKING STOCK

Luke 12:13-21

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Analysis by Lori A. Cornell

13 Someone in the crowd said to [Jesus,] "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me." 14 But he said to him, "Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?" 15 And he said to them, "Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions." 16 Then he told them a parable: "The land of a rich man produced abundantly. 17 And he thought to himself, 'What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?' 18 Then he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.' 20 But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' 21 So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God."



DIAGNOSIS: Possessed

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem): Storage

If you google a satellite picture of the town in which I live you will see a disproportionate number of storage units being built in our population-100,000, bedroom community. It seems that for every apartment that rises, garage that gets cluttered, office that overflows, a new block of units springs up. We are a people who like our stuff. When you have abundant possessions you need somewhere to put them.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem): Hoarding

But do we even know what we have in those boxes in our attics, and closets, and storage units? Old flip phones that we might need in an emergency? Lecture notes from college ... 20 years ago?

Baby clothes with spit-up stains, or crocheted socks that your son never could wear? Precious or useful at one time, perhaps. But forgotten in unmarked boxes, unaccounted for in any inventory. Stacked behind other unrecognizable boxes. Draped with old suitor bags containing dated three-piece suits. Hiding under a thick layer of dust and grime. So maybe not as important as we'd like to pretend. Our possessions surround us, impeding our ability to see what could be ahead; overwhelming us with more things left undone. And never really convincing us that we have enough or are enough. Our possessions bury us in a false sense of security and wealth. They possess us.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem): Repossession

When our stuff possesses us, we've got a problem. Our priorities are not God's priorities. We are in bondage to stuff, and cannot free ourselves. So God says to the rich man in Jesus' parable, "You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you" (v. 20). Bound to our stuff, God repossesses our lives. Poor toward God, we come to a fatal end.

PROGNOSIS: Liberated



Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution): Out of Hock

When a customer at a storage unit can't pay to maintain her unit, the business owner has the right to sell what is stored. It is the cruel outcome, with a transfer of ownership. But that's not how God decides to conduct his business in the world through his Son Jesus. Instead, Jesus gets us out of hock, paying the debt for all that stuff we've been hanging onto for fear of being worthless without them. Jesus counts us as his treasure. The debt is paid.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution): Burden Lightened

And liberated by the One who has his treasure in the right place—in God and in us—suddenly the stuff we've clung to so closely seems unimportant, secondary, tertiary, meaningless. Christ's love—apart from the stuff in which we had so desperately and mindlessly placed our hope—is enough. And, in him, we are enough. Our possessions are merely useful tools, and

not ultimate treasure. Our burden is lightened when we are rich in Christ.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution): Taking Stock

Interesting, isn't it, how healthy relationships can change our priorities? Claimed as Christ's treasure, we understand that our possessions aren't dependable. Christ is. And stuff just remains stuff. Useful, fascinating, beautiful even—but still stuff. And, just so we avoid that whole vicious hoarding cycle, we keep them in perspective: Thinking about a new toy for your daughter? Have her pick one to give away. Need a new suit? Give the old one to the career clothing bank. Tempted to rent a storage unit? Take stock. Bigger barns don't make better neighbors, you with hands open and ready to share generously do.