

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

ABUNDANT IN CHRIST

Luke 12:13-21

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 13)

Analysis by Timothy J. Hoyer

Luke 12.13-21 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 the 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: Full of Ourselves

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) – *Keeping It to Ourselves*

Only the very old know that "one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions." Yet they know this with regret. For, lying in their bed in the nursing home, they can appreciate very

little of what's left of the houseful of possessions that was once theirs. They too were told by God, "Your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?" (v. 20). When they were young and saved baseball cards or beanie babies, they did not pay attention to that question from God. When they left their parents' homes, they began saving other things-clothes, records, tapes, CDs; they began their collection of a favorite type of knick-knack-porcelain Terriers, spoons, license plates, objects of red, white, and blue. They accumulated a household of furniture and a kitchen full of dishes and pots and bowls. There are photographs in a dozen albums of their life-their kids, their travels, celebrations, and weddings. A few even saved money. As long as they had a lot of whatever was important to them, the abundance of possessions made them feel their life consisted of something good.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) – *With Hearts Empty*

The rich man found out that having an abundance of possessions to define his life was very short sighted. The young are short sighted in wanting to get things to show that they have a life, as someone in the crowd illustrates by his demanding Jesus to tell his brother to divide the family inheritance with him (v. 13). This short sightedness is due to having minds set on things that are on earth (Col. 3.2) and not having minds on things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God (Col. 3.1). The things on earth that are looked at are ourselves. Our minds are turned inward on us instead of on God. We do not look to God with trust but we look to ourselves.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) – *Foolishly Seeking God*

On account of not looking to God with trust, on account of saving up an abundance of possessions to have life, on account of minds being set on things that are on earth, "on account of

these the wrath of God is coming on those who are disobedient" (Col. 3.6). That wrath is God saying, "You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you" (Luke 12.20). Such is what happens with those who are not rich in faith toward God.

PROGNOSIS: Abundant in Christ

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) – *God Seeking Fools*

Jesus did not have ample goods laid up for many years. The possessions he had in abundance were all people's inwardly turned minds and God's wrath. On account of those things God said to Jesus, "Your life is demanded of you." And Jesus gave up his life to that demand of God by dying on a cross. But because Jesus took God's wrath for our sake, God raised Jesus from the dead! Even Jesus' life did not consist in the abundance of possessing people's inwardly turned minds and God's wrath. Jesus' very life was his trust in God. God had promised since the beginning that Jesus would suffer and rise on the third day so that all who believe in him, who believe that he died for them, they would be given life with God.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (External Solution) – *With Hearts Full*

The Spirit of Christ gives us belief in Jesus as the one who suffered for us, and so we believe that for his sake we are given life with God. Faith now sees that life is hidden with Christ in God, not in the abundance of possessions. People cannot see this life with God on their own. Rather, such life with Christ is given to them through telling them of Christ, by giving them a supper with Christ, by speaking forgiveness in Christ's name to them, and by promising those who are hearing God say, "Your life is demanded of you," that their life is hidden with Christ in God. So no matter what is taken from them now-their possessions, goods, fame, child or spouse-one day their life will be revealed in glory when Christ is revealed

(Col. 3.4).

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) – *Giving It Away*

Since life is now hidden in Christ, those who have faith in Christ do not need to prove to others or God that they have a life abundant because of their possessions. Life is now hidden in giving Christ to others. Life is to give Christ's mercy to others, Christ's forgiveness to others, and Christ's love to others. If one's barns are not big enough to hold one's goods or crops, those who trust Christ get to give away their goods and crops to those who need them-and the world has millions of people in need, even dying from their need. People admire big barns, tall building, large bank accounts and retirement funds, huge garages full of cars and things. Those are things on earth that easily turn minds to be set on them. Such things fill people's lives with power and influence and importance. No one notices the aging brother-in-law who visits his widowed sister-in-law in the nursing home whose life (home, husband, money, furniture) has been taken from her. She is not noticed by many either. Yet one day their lives will be revealed in the glory of Christ.