

ORMOND UNITING CHURCH



31 JULY 2022

PENTECOST 8



THE RICH FOOL

LUKE 12: 13-21

WORSHIP AT HOME

This time is an opportunity to be still, seeking to be aware of the presence of God within.

Carve out a time for this practice; prepare yourself, as you might for a usual Sunday morning and remember that there are others from the congregation gathering at the same time as you. There are also many from the church around the globe who are gathering to seek the presence of God as we are.

Prepare a space in the house; find a comfortable chair, light a candle, turn off distracting noises and close the door if that will help you to be still. This is something that does not need to be hurried.

Prayer for today

Loving Triune God, our hearts are bursting with gratitude for all that you give.
We are truly rich in you.
You have lavished us with gifts of grace and forgiveness.
Faith hope and love, friendship and comfort in grief,
abundant provision in times of need.

We praise you for you have filled us with peace in the midst of adversity, vision and signs of growth in the midst of the church restructuring, kindness and hospitality in the midst of war and millions of refugees.

You have been faithful for hundreds of years,
Through all the disruptions and unions, pandemics and plagues,
wars and skirmishes between nations and families and friends.
You have been faithful through it all.

You have taught us how to live and shown great love in the midst of hatred.
You have bought us the gift of your costly salvation.
You have died for us on the cross when our love was weak,
You have risen in glory and gifted your spirit to us to live changed lives. And our words could never tell, not even in part, of the debt of love that is owed by us.

Yet in our bewilderment and messy lives we are bound to confess that we live with a sense of anxiety and the mentality of scarcity. How did it happen God? How did we come to believe in scarcity? In “not enough to go around.”? In “you gotta look after yourself”?

How did we miss the plenty bursting out around us? How did we fall for the deception that what we can grasp in our hands would ever be enough? How did we grow so blind and so foolish, that we would allow so much beauty and life, joy and laughter, sharing and love, to pass us by unnoticed?

How poor we have become, and how poor we have made others, simply because we forgot your infinite, overflowing abundance; because we allowed ourselves to think that sharing and giving

leaves us with less; because we nurtured appetites that are never satisfied unless they have far more than is needed, thinking our greed would silence our fear.

Prayer for Forgiveness

Forgive us and teach us about your generosity again; remind us that you are able and willing to do far more than we can imagine; and open our eyes to the plenty we enjoy, the plenty we can share, and all the plentiful goodness in our world that cannot be owned, but can be enjoyed by all.

Assurance of Pardon

Lift up your spirits with thanksgiving to God whose nature is always to have mercy. The untarnished future is God's and it is now offered to you with open hands. You are forgiven, all things have become new! Through Christ Jesus our Saviour!

Thanks be to God, we are forgiven! Amen.

Scripture

OT Reading Intro

Hosea in this oracle is exploring how God's love for his chosen, precious and yet wayward child Israel, overcomes their deserved punishment for being unfaithful. There are some 61 verses in the Bible that speak of Israel as God's treasured possession, like Deuteronomy 7:6B. "The Lord God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the people who are on the face of the earth." For God, his treasure is his beloved people, both then and now – hear how great is his love.

Hosea 11: 1-11

God's Compassion Despite Israel's Ingratitude

- ¹When Israel was a child, I loved him,
and out of Egypt I called my son.
²The more I^[a] called them,
the more they went from me;^[b]
they kept sacrificing to the Baals,
and offering incense to idols.
³Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk,
I took them up in my^[c] arms;
but they did not know that I healed them.
⁴I led them with cords of human kindness,
with bands of love.
I was to them like those
who lift infants to their cheeks.^[d]
I bent down to them and fed them.
⁵They shall return to the land of Egypt,
and Assyria shall be their king,
because they have refused to return to me.
⁶The sword rages in their cities,
it consumes their oracle-priests,

and devours because of their schemes.
⁷ My people are bent on turning away from me.
 To the Most High they call,
 but he does not raise them up at all.^[e]
⁸ How can I give you up, Ephraim?
 How can I hand you over, O Israel?
 How can I make you like Admah?
 How can I treat you like Zeboiim?
 My heart recoils within me;
 my compassion grows warm and tender.
⁹ I will not execute my fierce anger;
 I will not again destroy Ephraim;
 for I am God and no mortal,
 the Holy One in your midst,
 and I will not come in wrath.^[f]
¹⁰ They shall go after the Lord,
 who roars like a lion;
 when he roars,
 his children shall come trembling from the west.
¹¹ They shall come trembling like birds from Egypt,
 and like doves from the land of Assyria;
 and I will return them to their homes, says the Lord.

Luke 12: 13-24; 32-34

The Parable of the Rich Fool

¹³ Someone in the crowd said to him, ‘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 towards God.’

²² He 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 clothing. ²⁴ Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds!

³² ‘Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. ³³ Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. ³⁴ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Reflection - Prepared by Rev Ron Townsend

Rich toward God?

Today we are examining the idea of TREASURE.

In the Gospel Reading today, we hear this verse: *'For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.'* Lk 12:34

So in the service in the church on Sunday morning 4 members (including myself) are sharing stories, thoughts, reflections on 'What their treasure is and how it relates to their faith.'

Then the congregation is breaking up into groups and members are sharing what their 'TREASURE' is (or a symbol of it) with other members of their group and then discussing the following:

"MY TREASURE IS....., AND THIS IS HOW IT RELATES TO MY FAITH."

So, perhaps you, **at home, could think about this question, and even (perhaps) share your TREASURE and what it means for your faith, over the phone with a friend or invite some one from the church family to visit you and share with them – what do you reckon?**

My (Ron Townsend's) REFLECTION on MY TREASURE and BEING RICH TOWARDS GOD is recorded below – it might help to stimulate your thinking.

RON'S REFLECTION:

I am wondering what you dream about in those times when you lie awake in the middle of the night – that is having a doughnut night. Or is that a little too personal?

So, I will confess to you what is one of my recurring dozy half dreams-wonderings in the middle of the night. I dream about making enough money to help my kids pay off their mortgages, I dream about having enough cash to pipe water to the middle of the country, desalinate it and create a green centre, I dream a lot about creating renewable energy projects with all my excess cash – wind farms, giant solar farms and the like – also housing the homeless, helping refugees and asylum seekers etc etc.

And from where do I acquire the necessary cash for these amazing ventures/dreams?

The stock market, hugely successful gambling on the Gee Gees, winning the lottery – now the problem with these amazing sources of funds is that I rarely bet on the horses or buy lottery tickets or play the stock market, because, if the truth be known, I am actually too stingy to have a bet on these 'possible' sources of funding!

But I also have another dream as well. I also dream about having enough money to (gulp!) have cash in excess in the bank, just-in-case, just in case!!!!

You get the picture!

So, these words from Jesus' parable about the man who builds bigger barns for his bigger crops, somewhat mirror my own thoughts and they hit me pretty hard!

[¹⁹And] I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.'

And in the parable, God's language hits 'home' very hard:

²⁰But 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?' ²¹So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God."

Last week we heard that God GIVES ABUNDANTLY to all who ask – GOD GIVES, not what we want, not what we dream of, but what we, as his children, need.

Brendan Byrne in his book on 'Luke: The Hospitality of God', comments on this parable as follows:

'The parable initiates a theme that becomes very prominent in the Gospel from now on: nothing is more destructive of life and humanity than preoccupation with acquiring, holding onto and increasing wealth.' (repeat)

He goes on

'The problem is not so much the possession of riches, as such. It is that the desire to acquire and enhance them, fed by insecurity, prevents people from attending to the relationship with God that brings the only security that counts. Such desire also erodes the concern for the other that is the basis of true community. Attachment to wealth is incompatible with living, sharing and celebrating the hospitality of God.' pg 115

Attachment to wealth is incompatible with living, sharing and celebrating the hospitality of God.

Let me conclude with the final verses from our Gospel reading this morning and a short story.

³²"Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. ³³Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. ³⁴For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

A story to finish with.

Back in the 80s when I was working in the Youth Ministry Unit for the Synod and we lived in Claire St McKinnon, we were pretty strapped for cash. I was on a minister's stipend, 3 small children and Mardie was studying full time. We never paraded the fact that we struggled on the financial front, so one morning we were utterly bowled over when we opened an envelope left in the letterbox which contained a \$1000 in cash and a short note: 'Hope this helps.' Unsigned.

One of our wonderful friends fulfilled the promise of God, for us and for themselves

³²"Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

Let us pray

Prayers – prepared by Heather Baxter

Father,

We come to you acknowledging the great treasure that you have gifted to us in sending your Son Jesus into the world. We know that your heart yearns for all people of the world to experience your love and care – and we know that our hands and hearts are the ones that are tasked to carry this love and care to the world.

We think of those without sufficient food both here and overseas.....

We think of those without safe housing both here and overseas.....

We think of those experiencing violence both here and overseas.....

We think of those who are socially isolated both here and overseas.....

Help our hearts and lives to become more loving and giving so that your love is spread to those who are within our reach.

In Jesus name we pray Amen

Together we say

Our Father..... etc.

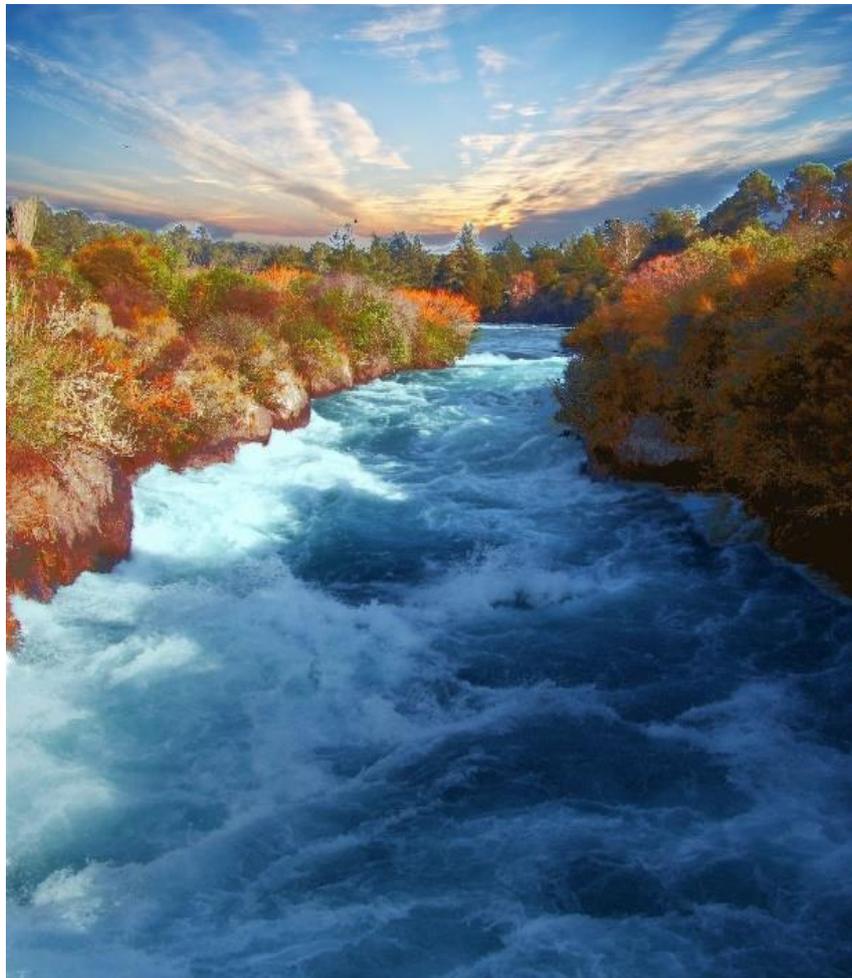
Blessing

The love of the Lord Jesus
draw you to himself;
the power of the Lord Jesus
strengthen you in his service;
the joy of the Lord Jesus fill your hearts;
and the abundant blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Thoughts for the week to come

“I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:6).”

These words from the letter to the Philippians offer a great hope. The confidence conveyed can bolster drooping spirits, we are each a work in progress, never a finished product. As long as we cooperate with God’s plan, the good work continues in us until the day we die and meet God face-to-face. We may feel stuck or that our life lacks purpose. Maybe we think we’re too old to change our thinking, or too young to take on responsibility. But there is always more to life than the present moment. We can be confident that God is at work in us and through us and desires - and will bring about so much more for us.



Postlude

You can find a copy of today's sermon along with other congregational information on the church website.

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