

Another parable about money? It makes us a little uncomfortable to talk about money...Do we have enough of it? How can others have more without me giving up mine? Will I, have enough not just for today, but for what I worry about needing for tomorrow? Have I worked hard enough, demonstrated that I earned it? Do I seem grateful when I am thinking about money and God in the same breath? How do I set aside my anxiety?

This story about Jesus and the parable he tells is not designed to ease our anxiousness, rather to redirect our attention. Perhaps Jesus was talking about loving your neighbor and perhaps even reflecting on the power of family—family as neighbor when the man in the Gospel story gets enough courage to ask the Rabbi for help. Jesus eats with pharisees, cares about the poor, and knows the law. The context is listening to the Word of God, and even justice; when we do not act with compassion, we are not living a life that experiences God's intended fullness. Is it astonishing that a man, a faithful man, presumably with a with family, wife, children, and in-laws, went to Jesus, Rabbi, to help arbitrate a challenging family conflict?

Wouldn't we all like Jesus to step in with compassion, understanding, forgiveness and wisdom to many of our family situations today—we know how Jesus would make it better for us—or so we would imagine! First, Jesus says he doesn't want to be the arbitrator, although as a teacher of the Law his opinion would have been respected and expected. Instead, Jesus sees the moment as an opportunity to talk about the preciousness of life; he suggests greed and anxiousness are behind the brother's request for help, although about this we cannot be sure. Jesus upends a discussion of wealth and money—a frequent topic in the gospel of Luke and makes it about life and living and what it is we value.

We may notice our own family and family stories here. Jesus ignores the particulars, although to us and to generations of family members, the story and the resolution matters, sometimes not in terms of wealth, but in terms of survival. Jesus does not say it doesn't matter to the brother who looks at his older brother and feels injustice, but he does want to point toward our attitude toward what he calls God's own abundance in the parable he begins to tell.

The farmer, excited about his abundant crop, suddenly sees an opportunity for building up his wealth—and even his security. We notice all the "I" language and also notice he doesn't even consider sharing his abundance which reflects the sun and the rain and the

power of crops to grow, and God as part of his good fortune. Instead, the farmer intends to rip down his barns and build new ones to hold his bounty—insuring his future. The parable overturns all intentions; Jesus tells us, the farmer will die that very night. Now what? We are being invited to not store up treasures for ourselves, but to be rich or abundant toward God—in every moment.

The moment is now. We cannot hold onto our future, only live in gratitude in the present. That is not to say we should not plan for the future, but Jesus points to the futility of the plans that do not allow us to live in the fullness of life, in the nearness of God in the present.

The very next text in the Gospel of Luke is about how we are to live—Jesus follows up his refusal to the man who came to him for help about his inheritance with words about not worrying. Can we really live as Christ suggests?

*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. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. 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! And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? If then you are not able to do so small a thing as that, why do you worry about the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith! And do not keep striving for what you are to eat and what you are to drink, and do not keep worrying. For it is the nations of the world that strive after all these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, strive for his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. "Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom". Luke 12:22-32*

*Susan*