

Psalm 104:1,5-16

Luke 12:13-34

Introduction

Tell story of the exaggerating Vicar.

500 metres long 300 metres wide 1 metre high

Like many of the parables that Jesus told this is a very familiar story. It is usually called the rich fool but I think it could more properly be called the warning against greed.

Jesus told this story in response to a member of the crowd who came to him with a grievance. We don't know the details or the rights and wrongs of the situation but the man said, "*Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.*" The man clearly thought he had a right to some of the inheritance and was grieved that his brother hadn't shared it with him. If we are thinking about generosity and fairness we might agree with the man.

But Jesus 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.*

At this moment in time many of us are worried about the cost of ordinary daily items. We are queuing for petrol, the cost of food has gone up, oil and gas are many times more expensive, and some people have had a reduction in their universal credit that is having a huge impact on their quality of life.

It would be fair to say that at the moment many in our community are full of anxiety. From what Jesus said we can see that the world, at least for much of human history, has faced the same problem. The difference though is the level at which the anxiety strikes. Many of Jesus' hearers only just had enough to live on, and there was always the prospect that one day they wouldn't even have that.

Most of them would have perhaps one spare garment, but not more – not a wardrobe full as I have. As with many in today's

Psalm 104:1,5-16**Luke 12:13-34**

non-western world – the family breadwinner being sick or injured, for example – could mean instant destitution. And it was to people like that, not to people worried about affording smart cars and foreign holidays that Jesus gave his clear and striking commands about not worrying about food and clothing.

As with so much of Jesus's teaching what Jesus is saying goes to the very heart of the way we are. But this wasn't just good advice on how to live a carefree life it was a challenge to the very centre of the world he lived in.

The man who wanted Jesus to arbitrate in a property dispute with his brother was typical in his attitude of many of Jesus' fellow Jews took towards the land itself. The land wasn't just where they happened to live; in the first century, as it still is today possession of the land was a vital Jewish symbol. Families clung to their inheritance for religious reasons as well as economic ones.

Jesus was coming with the message that God was changing all that. He wasn't tightening up Israel's defence of the land he had given them, he was longing to shower grace and new life on people of every race and place. Israel, as far as he could see, was in danger of becoming like the man in the story who wanted the security of enough possessions to last him a long time. Societies and individuals alike can think themselves into the position where God's answer to them is, 'You fool! Life isn't like that. The Kingdom of God isn't like that.

For us as God's children we need to understand that the Kingdom of God is, at its heart about God's sovereignty. It is about God filling the world with love and power. So that each of us, made in God's image can relax in the knowledge that God is in control. Reflecting on the birds and the flowers isn't meant to encourage a kind of nature mysticism but to stimulate serious understanding of who God is. God, the creator loves to give good gifts, loves to bring his power and healing into our lives and the way we live.

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This story is salutary because it shows us that dependence on possessions and wealth is futile. We may enjoy having what we want in life but it will never bring us true happiness. It will not bring us salvation and it won't enable us to know God and his power to change and transform us.

The man chose to care for his own needs, to store up his wealth – and it was all wasted. Had he chosen to share it with those who were in need he would have received so much more in return for his gift.

Most of us consider that we are not wealthy. Many of us are very concerned about how we will make ends meet this winter. But God calls us to trust him to care for us and for us to take seriously his commitment to the world and people he has created.

MY cats can never understand why I always know when they have been naughty and jumped up on the kitchen surfaces. What they don't realise is that they leave footprints! Usually muddy ones. I expect you have a similar scenario with your dogs!. We all leave footprints. Some of them are more noticeable than others. But every choice we make and everything we do impacts on the people and the world about us. Every kettle we boil, every mile we drive in our car, every piece of meat we eat, every piece of clothing we buy and then chuck away leaves a mark on creation.

Every time we rejoice in our own wellbeing and ignore the hardship and pain of others it impacts on the people around us. Every time we look after ourselves first and leave the dregs for others it leave a footprint. We may not be building 500metre barns but are we looking out for ourselves and ignoring God's plan for our lives and the lives of those around us

My cats