

Preaching for Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, Reno, NV

Pastor Scott Trevithick

Date: August 7, 2022, Yr. C 9th Sunday after Pentecost

Text: Luke 12:13-21 and 32-40. (Verses 32-40 are designated for this week and vv. 13-21 are a portion from last week I'm including because 1) they help establish context for today's reading and 2) we didn't read it last week because we were celebrating Christmas in July.

Title: What Are We Building?

Focus: Jesus warns against hoarding treasures only for one's own self and invites us to experience God's "good pleasure" or generosity and respond with our own. How have we or how will we at Good Shepherd live this out through the building of the "new" worship and welcome spaces in 2012, our celebration of the mortgage being paid off, and our ongoing ministry?

Gospel Reading: Luke 12:13-21 and 32-40

¹³Someone in the crowd said to [Jesus], "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me." ¹⁴But he said to him, "Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?" ¹⁵And 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." ¹⁶Then he told them a parable: "The land of a rich man produced abundantly. ¹⁷And he thought to himself, 'What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?' ¹⁸Then 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. ¹⁹And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.' 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."

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. ³⁵"Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit; ³⁶be like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so that they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks. ³⁷Blessed are those slaves whom the master finds alert when he comes; truly I tell you, he will fasten his belt and have them sit down to eat, and he will come and serve them. ³⁸If he comes during the middle of the night, or near dawn, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves. ³⁹"But know this: if the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁰You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour."

Good Shepherd is Celebrating

Good Shepherd is celebrating that it has been . . .

- 75 years since our founding in 1947
- 10 years since we have been worshipping in this space in 2012. The first worship service was held Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent, in 2012.

Pr. Carl Wilfrid helped us mark this 10-year milestone by preaching on Ash Wednesday and also the first Sunday in Lent. In his sermon, he talked about some of the barriers which challenged the congregation and its leaders. He recalled some of the comments and questions people had as the plans were developed. He spoke about our former worship space, now known to us as Shepherd Hall. Built in 1952, it has been beloved, but it became simply too cramped and limited and inadequate for modern ways of worship.

Today we are celebrating the paying off of a loan: When we built this building (Worship space, welcome space, and refashioning the former sanctuary to Shepherd Hall and a brand-new kitchen for fellowship and special events), we borrowed \$1.5 million to add to the \$1.5 million Good Shepherd folks had given earlier—beginning in 2003. Today we are celebrating that this \$1.5 million dollar loan has been paid off as of July. **We have built a building and now we are celebrating.**

Today's Gospel Reading: A Man is Celebrating

In today's gospel reading, Jesus told a story—a parable—about a man who was celebrating as well. The land of this man produced an unexpectedly large harvest.

- “The land of a rich man produced abundantly” (Luke 12:16).

And so, he wanted to celebrate this abundant harvest by tearing down his barn and building newer bigger ones. He wanted to build a building as well.

As Jesus tells the parable, . . .

- 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?’ (Luke 12:20)

We are celebrating. The man in the parable is celebrating. Both stories are in some way about building a building, how are they different? God calls him a fool. What's alike and what's different about these two stories? Or what caution may we hear from Jesus about what we treasure most?

Let's look at the man in the parable:

When his land produces abundantly, his response, instead of any expression of gratitude or any generosity, was to tear down his barns to build larger ones so he could hoard literally more than he could presently handle.

He is so exclusively focused on himself that he acknowledges no one else. He has removed himself or cut himself off from any connection to others or to community

that he could be experiencing. Look at the pronouns—it is all “I” and the possessive “my.”

Read this in such a way to emphasize the pronouns and the focus on self to the exclusion of God and others in the community.

“The land of a rich man produced abundantly. ¹⁷And he thought to himself, ‘What should *I* do, for *I* have no place to store *my* crops?’ ¹⁸Then 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. ¹⁹And *I* will say to *my* soul (or also translated *self*), ‘Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.’

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?’

[Jesus said,] ²¹So it is with those who store up treasures for *themselves* but are not rich toward God.”

As an extension of this parable, Jesus told his followers not to worry or fret about what they would wear or what they would eat. Jesus gave examples from nature to clarify how God provides for living things that don’t store up food or raiment for themselves. Instead, those who follow Jesus should look for God’s kingdom and prepare for it.

Jesus continues with a tone of reassurance,

- “Do not be afraid . . . for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

The intended focus to which God invites us is outward (rather than inward to self) and to community and relationships.

- This contrasts with the hoarding behavior we see in the parable. It is God’s intent to be gracious and generous, and to inspire that generosity in others.

The Hopes of Good Shepherd about the New Space

I’d like to show you some video snippets from videos capturing the hopes and anticipation of folks from Good Shepherd expressed in 2010 ***Growing to Serve*** and 2013 ***Continuing Our Journey Together***. They video snippets show how people view the anticipated new space.

- **Insert video clip from Paul Brosy, *Growing to Serve*, (8:27- 8:41)**
 - “This is God’s property . . . how we give back is our reflection of that love of God and all the many blessings we have received.”
- **Insert video clip from Vic Williams, *Growing to Serve*, (11:17-11:21)**
 - “What’s better than building a new house for God; it’s really God’s house.”

These comments demonstrate a focus on God and our relationship or response to God, rather than a hoarding/"Mine" focus in which the rich man attributes success only to himself.

From David Lose about "God's Good Pleasure"¹

"Because we have Jesus' promise that it is God's good pleasure and heart's desire to give us all good things, we are suddenly free to give away, to care for others, to lose ourselves in service, and in all these ways find our security and confidence not in our earthly possessions or accomplishments but rather in our relationship with God."

- The focus is away from ourselves and to our relationship with God and how that draws us into connection to others.
- From the comments of people on the LCGS video about an outward vs. inward focus—they express hopes for what the building will enable us to do. It is not about building for its own sake, but for the sake of ministry and those yet to come.
 - **Insert video clip from *Growing to Serve* (11:21- 11:33)**
 - Pr. Rebecca—welcome of people who are not here yet. "I love that way that it invites us to consider and keep in front of us the people who are not here yet."
 - Pr. Carl: "The space will say, 'Welcome, to new folks; we have room for you here.'"
 - Thinking of those "who are not here yet" keeps us focused on a sense of mission or purpose. The Church is not a club for members, but a place where we welcome broken and needy people—and that includes all of us.

Welcome as a Form of Ministry

- **Insert video clip from *Continuing Our Journey Together* from 1:02-2:11**
 - Becky on welcoming 1:02- "It is the perfect name because you do feel welcome there."
 - Pennie and Knute 1:18-1:41
 - Knute: "There's usually someone there to grab you and welcome you. . ."
 - Pennie: "Not just one person, but many. . ."
 - Shaun and welcome 1:42-2:11
 - "There is room for you right when you arrive. . . It matters that there are windows to see and notice "Oh, there's room for us. . ."

¹ Posted in a commentary on this text from Luke at *In the Meantime* August 12, 2016.
<https://www.davidlose.net/2016/08/pentecost-12-c-what-would-you-do/>

The building—the physical space—as much as we may enjoy it or find it attractive, it is a tool or resource—or gift, you might say, for carrying out the ministry God calls us to do. The physical space is a challenge to us to live out our Welcome Statement—it encourages us or urges us to live it out—we can't rely on the physical space itself, but that physical space is a tool or a gift of which we are stewards—to use it to invite people in:

No matter who you are
or where you are on life's journey,
you are welcome here.

This is a place where lives are made new.

Come and see! (Excerpt from our Welcome Statement)

The Sanctuary/Worship Space as a physical space which truly enhances worship through singing, and music, and can be used to celebrate music/the arts and invite others in.

- **Insert from *Continuing Our Journey* (4:41-5:46) talking about music and connection with the broader community:**
 - Linda Smith: “It’s spiritual, it’s uplifting.”
 - Deanna Gaunt: “This room just sings—it’s joyous. All the musicians that we’ve spoken to—they love the acoustics. They say this is a great venue for them.”
 - Jennie: “There’s a nice, reverberant space for voices to soar out.”
 - Shaun O’Reilly: “I think that as more people from the community get to see it, they get to see it as a beautiful, welcoming space that they get to have something here.”
 - Barb Reese: It’s wonderful that we can be a part of the community. It’s wonderful that we worship here and we’re welcoming for everyone, but it’s so neat to come here for a concert and realize how rearranged this room can become.”

We talked about this just last week—we had Erik Kao as guest pianist at the keyboard on the Sunday after he had hosted three straight weeks of community concerts for Artown here in the Good Shepherd sanctuary. We welcomed folks from the community—these are folks who came for classical music—they are not likely coming because they know Good Shepherd as a church. They may have negative impression of the Christian Church because of the impression they get of churches from the broader culture. We get a chance to surprise people and counter those negative impressions. I told you all the story about the woman who was in the Welcome Space looking at the cardboard cutout of Martin Luther and his phrase “Here I stand” as a statement of conscience as an expression of faith. She said, “A church that stands for social justice; I’ll have to check that out.”

We had a person who contributed to the collection we're taking to help kids at Mt Rose Elementary School get ready for back-to-school with socks, underwear, and shoes.

What are We Building or What Are We Celebrating?

Did you hear what Paul and Vic each said in their own way in the video clips: Our orientation or way of thinking about this place or space is that it is a resource or tool of which we are stewards. Giving thanks to God for this gift of this space, we think about how we may wisely use it for the sake of God's Kingdom. As Paul and Vic each said, *it belongs to God*. That helps us see it as a gift to be wisely used rather than something for hoarding, which is how the man in the parable behaved.

Jesus says, "34For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

At 10 a.m. today, we gathered in the former sanctuary space now known as Shepherd Hall. We love that space. We prayed and gave thanks for the couples who have been married there, the children and adults who have been baptized, the young people who have confirmed and affirmed their faith, the people who gathered week after week to be enriched in worship, for the saints for whose lives we have given thanks—we are reminded of all that as we gather in that space. That's a treasured space.

And as we gather in this physical space, and as you have heard the comments of people about this physical space and what it provides for us, and as you are here week by week, as you think about the welcome that we're able to offer--these are treasured spaces. And yet ultimately, the treasure is not in the physical spaces themselves, but in the ministry these spaces allow us to do and in the relationship of trust that we have with God and in the call of God to be engaged in service in a broken and needy world.

- "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

May our treasure be in building a community that, by the grace of God, we invite and welcome people, to "come and see lives where are made new." May that be what we treasure and celebrate and build together.