

St Marc Grenoble

Sunday 31st July, 2022 (Trinity 7)

Colossians 3: 1 - 11

Luke 12: 13 - 21

'The Gift of Real Life'

Good morning and Welcome everyone - here in Church and there at Home!

Let's PRAY

So what did you make of today's readings? A couple of quite demanding ones - different from others recently. What struck you? What rang your bell? What made your ears twitch?? Please share ... Thank you.

Personally, I've found these readings from 'The Message' shake me out of my rut a bit; in fact they're sometimes really forthright.

I love the way the passage from Paul's letter to the Church in Colossae begins: 'So if you're serious about living this new resurrection life with Christ, act it.' That comment is really challenging.

Maybe we should ask ourselves, 'How has my life changed since I became a Christian?'

Paul makes the point: that living the Christian life, cannot be only about going through the motions. He challenges us to pursue a new lifestyle - 'Pursue the things over which Christ presides. Don't shuffle along, with eyes to the ground - absorbed with things right in front of you.'

Today, it may be more relevant to say 'don't shuffle along with eyes glued to your phone' The number of accidents to drivers and pedestrians, caused by people looking at their phones, rather than what's going on around them, is quite staggering. And phones definitely limit one to one, face to face communication with those closely around us.

Paul says; 'Look up and be alert to what is going on around Jesus - that's where the action is. See things from His perspective. Paul is blunt: 'Your old life is dead. Your new life, which is your real life - even though invisible to spectators - is with Christ in God. He is your life!'

Paul is saying: If your life hasn't changed dramatically since you became a Christian (gave your life to Jesus) then you've completely missed the point!

He tells us to kill off everything connected 'with that way of death (rather than life!)' - inappropriate sexual behaviour; self centredness; greed, which have no place in a life shaped by God. We should know better; this sort of behaviour makes God really angry.

We need to get rid of irritability, bad temper, meanness, profanity and dirty talk. Paul tells us 'from now on, we need to be defined by Jesus and to be included in the life of Jesus'.

So, as we moved on to our Gospel reading, we heard a parable Jesus told about a rich, greedy farmer.

This parable was prompted by someone complaining his brother was not sharing the family inheritance fairly; but Jesus' response to the man's request for Jesus to tell his brother what to do, is interesting. In effect, he was saying that families should not need an external arbiter to sort out their family affairs.

But I'd like to focus on the parable for a few minutes: it's an interesting story, and it is often misunderstood. The story is not about wealth or success – but about how you handle it, and what you do with it! It's a story about greed and selfishness.

God doesn't condemn anyone for working hard, and having a rich harvest – what He condemns is personal and corporate greed – keeping everything for yourself instead of helping others around us and sharing with those in need.

It's too easy to condemn others; yet I think many of us are naturally selfish, I know I am.

But, this isn't just about personal issues – whenever I hear this story, I think about things we used to hear about like: grain mountains, butter mountains and wine lakes, which are, or were, stored by wealthy European countries.

It is easy for wealthy nations (like wealthy farmers) to store and amass food, when people in so many nations around the world, like Sudan, Palestine, Syria, Bangladesh and Ethiopia are starving to death in their thousands.

It's also easy for us to say "that's nothing to do with us, it's 'the Government' – but it's up to us to hold our politicians to account – they work for us and we

should tell them when we think they get it wrong! I have a track record of writing to politicians about such things.

Although this parable has some very obvious messages for us, it doesn't answer the question 'What was the rich man's folly?' in one neat, clean answer. Actually, his follies are varied and need to be looked at from several angles. Let's look at a few specifics:

First: Preoccupation with Possessions In the Gospel story, it is obvious that this man's possessions, his crops and his wealth have become the sole purpose of his life. We need to understand that we cannot take anything with us at the end of our life.

A materialistic lifestyle has a hollowness about it. But, sharing what we have with those who don't have it, can give great pleasure not only to the recipient, but also to the giver.

There are many opportunities to give - not only money, but effort and time; and to get personally involved in helping other people (and you don't have to be wealthy to do it). My experience is that when you get involved in that kind of work, you will derive immense personal joy out of being able to help people face to face.

Second: Security in Self Sufficiency this parable gives a picture of a man who doesn't need anyone else – he can 'provide for himself'. He has no need of family, or friends. He doesn't need or want the support of the community around him; or the security of God's love.

How sad, and how lonely! – Yet, it seems in this day and age that many of us strive to be in that position; but, as human beings, we were certainly not created to thrive in a solitary existence.

Being a Christian is partly about worshipping God, in fellowship with others – because we need other people - our faith thrives in community.

The Grasp of Greed Greed is the other side of the coin to generosity – it never entered the 'Rich Fool's' head to think what he may do for others; he never dreamt that he should have any responsibility to use some of his wealth to provide for others who are less fortunate.

Greed has eaten away any compassion he may once have had. He is, in effect, entombed in his own hard shell!

The Hollowness of Hedonism Hedonism is the belief that life is simply for leisure and pleasure.

This man had the dream of spending his future indulging his whims and desires! The challenge is, it's the dream many of us have for retirement; but I can tell you - from personal experience - it rarely satisfies, or gives fulfilment.

It's the attitude that says I've done alright for myself, now I'll sit back: eat , drink and be merry, while others starve. 'On a previous occasion, when I preached on this passage, I gave it the title: Eat, drink and be dead!

But this simply doesn't work for us as Christians. We are called to share our wealth, through our giving both to the church and to other people.

So, let's reflect for a moment about what it is that gives meaning to our life – both as individuals and as a congregation of Christians – what is our true purpose in life and what should we be doing differently to achieve it??

Let's pray: Lord help us not to be like the man in the parable we heard this morning.

Help us to share the love and the possessions you give us with others, however rich or poor we may feel.

Help us to delight in sharing and caring with others and bless us with your joy and delight as we seek to serve you faithfully. For Jesus' sake. **Amen**