

Luke 12.13-21

Bigger barns

Christ Church Selly Park

Sunday 5 September 2021

Graffiti

Have you ever blurted something out, only to regret it later?

When I was much, much younger, my parents took my sister and me to London to visit some friends.

As we walked to their flat I saw some graffiti... which had a funny word in it that I'd never seen before. I was fascinated by it, and of course I repeated it as soon as we arrived – I'm not sure I'll *ever* forget the embarrassed silence that followed.

As far as I remember, we never visited those friends again... one of whom is now a bishop in the Church of England!

Our reading today begins with a person from the crowd blurting something out to Jesus: **'Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me'** (13). I hope he later regretted it, because that means he understood the parable Jesus told next.

Bigger barns

There was a **rich man**, Jesus said – a farmer, with lots of fields, and he had a colossal crop, a huge harvest (16), so much that he would never have to work again (19).

The modern version is something like the farmer who owned a load of fields near where my parents live. A few years ago he sold it to developers – and it was enough land to build 5,000 homes. He lives on his own island now.

Jealous? I wonder what you would do if you lucked out like that farmer, or the rich man in Jesus' story? If I'm honest my first instinct would probably be the same:

'He said, "I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. And I'll say to myself, 'You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy: eat, drink, and be merry.' " '

Luke 12.18-19 (NIV)

What do you dream of? *Pause* I dream of a nice cottage with the sea on one side and mountains out of the other... Except, as Jesus said, **'Life does not consist in an abundance of possessions'** (15).

There is more to life than having the right phone in your hand, a TV in your bedroom, the right console underneath it, the right label on your clothes, the right trainers on your feet.

One reason I hated non-school uniform days was because I didn't have any of that – *but I still wanted it.*

And that's the problem with stuff. Whether we have lots of it or none of it, it's easy to become obsessed with it, and lose sight of what actually matters.

The problem isn't the stuff, the problem is what it does to us.

Me, me, me

The man who blurted out from the crowd was more interested in getting half of his parents' estate, than in grieving for them, or restoring his relationship with his brother.

The problem with the rich man in Jesus' story wasn't the fact that he was very rich, but his attitude: **'I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. And I'll say to myself...'** (18-19).

Have you seen *Finding Nemo*? This farmer was like the seagulls... all they can say is, 'Mine... mine... mine...'

Rich towards God

Jesus said, don't be like the seagulls in *Finding Nemo*. Well, he would have done.

Don't be like the seagulls; instead, be **'rich towards God'** (21).

Think to yourself: what matters to God – and then be rich in that. Be rich in being generous. Be rich in being kind and loving. Be rich in being obedient and faithful to God's way of life.

Be rich in prayer. That phrase has been on the tip of my tongue all week and only managed to pop out this morning: **be rich in prayer.**

Whatever we are starting, and whatever we are *restarting* – let's **be rich in prayer.** Why? Because prayer helps us stay focused on God and what matters to him.