

The rich fool in the parable of our dear Lord was certainly a 21st-century Canadian. Listen to the way he talks: “my crops ... my barns ... my grain and my goods ... my soul ...” This is the essence of modern culture. Our culture strongly emphasizes self-determinism: No one can tell me what to do with my things.

In view of the Scriptures, this is wrong-headed at best, blasphemous at worst. All we have is from the heavenly Father. All earthly blessings like food and house and occupation are from Him. Our abilities and hard work are also things that He has enabled us to use, so we cannot say that we have earned anything by our powers.

Particularly, our soul is from Him. He created us, mind, body, and soul. Our being is from Him, as opposed to something that we have built or that is freely chosen by us. Who and what we are is always a gift of the heavenly Father, unless who and what we are is rebellion and arrogant rejection against Him. All good gifts are from Him, and contrariwise, all bad gifts are from sin.

When the rich man and God talk about the soul, they do not necessarily mean only the invisible, nonphysical part of a man that we sometimes call his spirit. The soul can also include all parts of the man including his heart and mind. The soul can be his life, that precious and sacred gift from the Father. There is no reason to think that the use of

the word “soul” in the passage means that Christ is limiting any part of us from being a gift of the Father, nor limiting what part of us we have a responsibility to use in a God-pleasing fashion.

The man said, “My life and soul and mind are mine! Nobody can tell me what to do with them!”

But God replied, “Tonight your soul is demanded back from you.” In other words, his time was up, and an accounting was due. His life was ended, and he had to face the Judge.

We can see that the man is clearly foolish, as Christ calls him. Notice, however, that we have the advantage in the parable of seeing the big picture. We see God’s condemnation of his behaviour. But in our own lives, we have only our own, very limited perspective. Do we notice when we are foolish?

We are surely not as ultimately foolish as the man who condemns himself to hell by his self-centred behaviour. Yet we have selfish tendencies, even if we disguise them from our consciousness. We sometimes act from our foolish sinful nature, rather than as obedient children of the heavenly Father. So let us diligently take note and warning from the words of Christ.

Sometimes we use our possessions as idolatry. This sounds harsh, but isn’t that what we do when we treat creature comforts as a kind of

gospel? We often find our happiness in the physical blessings we enjoy. We may treat them as our balm in times of trouble. Rather than turn to God as our comfort and treasure, we most likely turn to other things first, and if they are not making us feel what we want, then we go to God.

Do not think that you have entirely escaped this attitude. Ponder how much time is spent this holiday focused on the preparation, anticipation, consumption, and enjoyment of earthly blessings. Then compare that with the amount of time we spend actually giving thanks to God. It is a steep ratio, slanted entirely on one side. We have a strong tendency to treat this holiday as “Gluttony Day” rather than “Thanksgiving”.

Christ summarizes the rich fool’s attitude with a word that is translated in the holy Gospel as “covetousness”. But a better translation might be “greed”. I think we like the word “covetousness” better, because then it seems like an involuntary emotion that we can hardly resist anyway, so it is not as big a deal as outright greed. But, however you translate the word, Saint Paul in Colossians says that it is the same as idolatry. This is very serious.

Even as Christians, we cannot entirely avoid this sin. We should strive to eliminate as much as possible this desire for more and bigger

possessions, and from the tendency to view them simply as mine, not as gifts of God.

When we see them as gifts, it changes the way we approach the Father’s blessings. A greedy man, as in the parable, hoards up riches and stores them away for his own use. He does not think about anyone but himself. In his mind, he is the only important one that he has to take care of.

A man who sees his possessions as gifts from a loving Father will think about how he can use the blessings for others. As children imitate their father, so we try to imitate the heavenly Father in being generous givers. This does not mean that when you are so poor that you have nothing to spare, then you practically take food out of the mouths of your children to give it away. But more reasonably, when God provides a surplus of blessings, we should think about helping others with it.

How can we do that? Why not worry about the future and store up every bit of grain and every penny we possibly can? Faith in a loving Father is the only real way to avoid worry and anxiety. He is taking care of you. If you give away some, He will not let you starve. If you are generous, He is pleased.

Christ is the epitome of generosity. He considered all His possessions as things to be given away. He is Lord over all things, yet He acted as if He were Lord of nothing. Can you even picture Christ saying, “This is mine, you can’t have it”? Instead, He came to earth to share all that was His, up to and including His own life.

God told the rich fool, “Tonight your life is demanded of you.” Yet for Christ, there was never a time that His life could be demanded of Him. He could not be put under judgment for idolatry. Likewise, no one could take His life from Him. That was His by right, and He had the power to hold onto His life as long as He pleased. But He did not consider what pleased Himself. He first considered what pleased His heavenly Father. Then He considered what would benefit mankind the most, which is the laying down of His life for us sinners.

One day, our soul and life will be demanded of us. We will have to give an account of how we have used the gifts of the Father. But we can rest assured that our accounting is good because Christ makes us rich in God. Although our foolish flesh still has the same impoverished greed that it ever had, God has put a new heart in us. The new heart reflects the reality of Christ’s redemption and the fact that we are a new creation. For the new heart in us wants only to love and give generously to our fellow man, as the Heavenly Father gives generously.

“Thanksgiving” Luke 12:13-21 Thanksgiving 2022

The new heart wants nothing but to give thanks for the overwhelming generosity of God toward us. The new heart wants to be like Christ in considering no sacrifice too great to help a person in need.

The Spirit helps us to put to death the foolish flesh by repentance and nurture the new heart by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In His Name, we ask for this, Amen.