

Good News

- A successful life is not measured by the abundance of possession
- God frees us from being enslaved to money and possessions
- God gives us the joy having treasure in heaven

Let's get into the text: **Someone in the crowd said to him, 'Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.'**

- Jesus has been teaching his disciples
- And he'll go back to doing this.
- But here we have a voice from the crowds
- Remember: Jesus only taught the crowds in parables
- And this is what we are about to get.

The problem? A common one: the division of an inheritance

- Why is the man calling on Jesus to help?
- Well, he calls him 'Teacher'
- Someone in authority, well informed by God's word.
- It seems like a sensible approach.
- But Jesus discerns that something is not right.

Listen: **But [Jesus] said to him, 'Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?'**

- He will not be drawn into a conflict between those
- Who are enslaved to money and possessions.
- He is not the servant of money or possessions, but their master.

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.'

- These words aren't addressed just to the man
- But to all who approach Jesus asking for help.
- Practically speaking, how can we take care and be on guard?
- We'll think about this as we go on.
- Notice, by the way, that his teaching is also given to us by St Paul

We heard it today: **Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry). On account of these the wrath of God is coming on those who are disobedient.** Colossians 3

- Did you notice how St Paul links greed and *idolatry*?
- Luther makes this link in the Large Catechism:
- A god is that which we hope in and fear losing.
- The natural god of human beings: money and possessions.
- We need God, the true God, to free us from this idol.

Jesus does this work for us, first of all by giving us his word: **Then he told them a parable: 'The land of a rich man produced abundantly.'**

- The man is already wealthy; now he has a super abundance

But listen to what happens next: **And he thought to himself, "What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?"**

- This man is not taking care and being on his guard against greed
- Because he does not thank God for the gifts that he has been given,
- In fact, he sees his abundance as a problem: he has nowhere to put it
- St John Chrysostom: he had a place: the bellies of the poor and hungry

- No, he thinks about his wealth only in terms of keeping it for himself

Then 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. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry."

- He does not consider God, he does not even bring in family or friends,
- These would be the first practical steps in guarding against greed.
- Rather, he makes a judgment about himself, about his future:
- That from now on he will be in a terrestrial paradise.
- But he is in fact enslaved to money and possessions:
- He is acting as if life is about accumulating them for the sole purpose
- Of serving the body, the body which is heading to death.

In fact, this is how the parable goes on: **But 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?"**

- The man judged himself to be someone entering into the good life,
- But God has judged him to be a *fool*.
- This is the same word, by the way, that is used in Psalms 14 and 53
- Where it is written: The fool says in his heart, "There is no God."
- God calls the man a fool, an idolator, and also has a question for him:
- All those possessions, who will now get them?
- From the context we could say: relatives who will fall into conflict,
- As they themselves are caught up in the same greed, in the same folly.

Jesus ends his parable with these words: **So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich towards God.'**

- It's folly to live life as if the goal is to accumulate money, possessions
- When we have the opportunity to invest wisely with God.

Later on, when Jesus is speaking to his disciples, he says these words,
Where he gives more practical help in guarding against greed: **'Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell 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. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**

- Selling from your abundance to give to those who are in need:
- A God-given and practical way to guard against the idolatry of greed,
- And one that we do even in simple ways here at Bethlehem.

But in all this we need to remember that Jesus is not just a wise teacher,
He is a saviour, he is the only one who can save us from greed.

He, who gave us this teaching, was on his way to the cross,

To take our sin upon himself, including the sin of our greed,

And to assure us that we are the treasured possession of God.

Jesus life was not about going to the cross to gain money or possessions,

But to gain our souls for God.

Put your trust not in money or possessions,

Or even in your own ability to deal wisely with what you have.

Put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ,

Because in his self-sacrifice for your sake you have the generosity of God,

And it is in receiving this generosity

That we have the power and the freedom,

To have our hearts rest safely in God. In Jesus' name. Amen.