

Sermon Notes



You can use these notes to help prepare your Harvest of Hope talk.

Luke 12:16-30

“This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.”

There's a wonderful children's book by Belfast-born author and illustrator Oliver Jeffers, called *The Fate of Fausto*. Taking his cue from the story of Faust, Jeffers tells the tale of a man who not only wants to own everything in the world but claims that he already does. He tells the trees they belong to him, the flowers and the mountains. He is very angry if nature tries to answer back. Finally, he boards a boat and tries to claim ownership of the sea. When it resists he stamps his feet on it in rage, with predictable consequences.

The parable of the rich and foolish man tells a similar story. Notice how the man regards the crops as his entirely his own, though it is unlikely that he has been the one harvesting them. His barns are his own, his grain and his goods. His soul is his own - or so he believes: 'I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.'

The rich man has failed to use what he has for the only truly worthy purpose: being 'rich toward God'. To be rich towards God is to seek God's Kingdom (v. 31), to sell what we have and give to those in need and to value the treasures of heaven more highly than anything the world has to offer (v. 33).

Commentators Barbara Reid and Shelly Matthews propose that Jesus' story of the rich man and his call to consider the ravens and the lilies are intended to show 'images of improper and proper relationship to Earth and its bounty'. They suggest that the rich man objectifies Creation, where Jesus calls his listeners to attend to it as a place of God's action and blessing. (*Wisdom Commentary: Luke 10-24, 2021*).

In South Sudan, the climate crisis is worsening conditions for farmers already battling against floods and droughts. What is our responsibility here? We may not feel that we are rich but are we more focused on shoring up our own security than thinking of our global neighbours in need? How can we practice attention both to the wonder of Creation and to the reality of life for those feeling the greatest impacts of climate change?





Kid's Talk

Explain that you are going on a day trip. Check your watch. You need to leave to catch your train in 5 minutes! You're sure everyone can manage the rest of the service without you.

Now you need some more volunteers to help you pack. You're taking a lot of food and snacks with you in case you get hungry. Show the children the food and the shopping bag.

Ask one volunteer from among the children and young people to keep an eye on the time for you and give them the alarm clock or kitchen timer set to 5 minutes.

Bring out the shopping bag and ask the children to start filling it with the food.

You quickly decide that bag isn't big enough for all the snacks you want to take and pull out the rucksack. Ask the children to transfer the food over and add more.

Then you decide the rucksack isn't big enough, etc., working your way up to the suitcase.

At some point before you've finished the alarm goes off! You're not packed and you're going to miss your train!

Explain to the children that it's okay you can take the trip another time. Ask them what you could do differently next time. Do they think you need all those snacks and food for a day trip?

In our reading today Jesus told a story about a rich man who owned land. On the land the people who worked for him grew food. The land grew lots of crops. One year, the man's harvest was bigger than ever before. He had more food than he knew what to do with. He had so much food that it wouldn't fit inside the barns on his farm.


The man had to choose what to do with all those crops and all that food.

What could he have done? *Give time for the children and young people to answer.*

What he chose to do was to build even bigger barns and to keep all the food for himself, just in case. Jesus' story tells us that there's a problem here. Firstly, a bit like me when I'm packing for a journey, the rich man didn't recognise that he already had more than enough, more than he needed. He already had enough food to fill his barns to overflowing.

Second, the rich man focused only on himself; he didn't think about other people.

And third, he forgot what it means to be really 'rich'.





The rich man held on tight to what he had and by doing that he missed out on the chance to share with his neighbours. He missed out on the chance to see what sharing could do, the change and growth it could bring for his community. When we share and help one another - that's when we find real riches.

Jesus tells us not to 'store up treasures' for ourselves but to be 'rich towards God'. How do we do that? By listening to God's word and by being generous, loving, and open-hearted with one another. Elsewhere in the Bible, Jesus says that everyone will know who his followers are by the love we show one another. That is what marks us out as Jesus' disciples. We are 'rich towards God' when we follow God's commandments to love God and to love each other. Your challenge for this week is to think about whether you have more than enough, more than you need. What are you doing with the surplus, with the extra? Are you building bigger barns, holding on to things tightly, and keeping what you have to yourself? What could you do differently?

One step might be sharing our food [as we are doing through our harvest offering today]. Or it could be donating toys or clothes, sharing our time by volunteering to help someone, or sharing our love by seeking out someone who needs support and kindness.

As we celebrate Harvest today, let's remember those who do not have enough and consider what we can do to be 'rich towards God' and one another.

Explain that now you have learnt to think about what is enough you are going to take a different approach to packing next time. And you are going to share some of what you have with others. The food will be donated to a local charity and you are going to share some of the sweets/chocolate with the children now!

