



# ***The Westminster Pulpit***

Sermons Preached at Westminster Presbyterian Church  
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## ***“Didn’t see that coming!”*** **Sermon on Luke 12:13-21**

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Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

I’ve had a few weeks in a row of some bad news, sad news, broken hearts, and a change of plan... or two or three. And “I didn’t see that coming.”

But that’s life! It’s always life. For these days that the Lord has made are filled with surprises, the good, the bad, and the ugly.

And a bit of the ugly is what you’ll hear in our sermon text this morning. You will hear about a man who is peeved at his brother because his brother won’t share the inheritance.

Some of the most colorful stories I know are those that come following the “reading of the will.” I’ve seen people sacrifice a lifetime of family over an inheritance—brother against brother, against sister, against stepmom, and against dad. And I don’t think anyone ever saw that coming!

“Jesus, tell my brother to share the inheritance!” Instead, Jesus will share a parable about a very selfish man who had no idea what was coming.

But after you hear this parable, you’ll have some idea, and you can never say, “I didn’t see that coming.”

### ***Luke 12:13-21***

Someone in the crowd said to him, ‘Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.’ But he said to him, ‘Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?’ 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.’

Then he told them a parable: 'The land of a rich man produced abundantly. And he thought to himself, "What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?"

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."

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?" So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich towards God.'

It blew him away! He didn't see it coming. The barns were at maximum capacity, and they still hadn't harvested the back 40. "What should I do?"

Not a bad problem to have! I wouldn't mind having a day when I'm caught by surprise. "What am I going to do with all this money? Why, there's money everywhere. Money on the table, money under the table, money out the door. Money out the window. Money on the lawn! Money in the garage! In the cars! Money! Money! Money! What am I going to do?"

I've never said, "I have too much money." Have you ever said that?

Who can relate to this parable of abundance? This parable is aimed at the overly botoxed, "Let's rent out Venice for our wedding" crowd.

But, just when I say that I am reminded that Jesus said, "be on guard for all kinds of greed." Be on guard for all kinds of selfish desires. Now to that we can relate.

For me, time can be a selfish desire. The interruption of "MY Time." When you have a plan, and then someone ruins it. "You can't play golf today!" "Why not? All my friends are playing golf today. Their wives let them go out whenever. You need to cut me some slack. It's not like I play golf all the time. Why can't I play golf?" "Well, because it is Sunday and you're the preacher..."

Of the 24-hours in a day, how much of that is your time? Snapping up minutes and moments all for yourself. How much of those 24-hours is your time? Guarding those moments against the demands of the world. "Oh, what is it this time?"

Be on guard for all kinds of greed and all kinds of selfish desires.

To be heard can be a selfish desire. The need to fill your day with your argument! To win the argument at all costs. To be right and noted for it! How badly do you need to be heard?

As a white male, I've been told it's my time to shut up and listen. And I have a thing or two to say about that!

Be on guard all kinds of greed and all kinds of selfish desires. How are you doing with selfish desires? If you don't know, chances are you may live alone! I have found that having a relationship with someone is the best way to discover your selfish desires.

For instance, I have a desire for one pillow to be on the bed. I have one head. I only need one pillow. Two people, two heads, two pillows. My wife doesn't see it that way. But, I have compromised my selfish desire and each evening, I spend 5- or 10-minutes throwing pillows off the bed. In the morning, I put the pillows back on the bed. Have you ever been to our bedroom? No! No one has been to our bedroom or seen these pillows! She's not here today... and you don't need to tell her!

It's when you're in community that you realize your selfish desires, as the 50-year-old woman in the navy turtleneck sweater and red jacket said to me in early June, "Why is it always so hot in this sanctuary?" "I don't know! I'll work on that for you!"

Selfish desires, that's why the internet was invented. Your desires are at your fingertips. All that time, losing track of time.

Selfish desires, who can get away from them? I suspect we'll take them with us into the afterlife! When most of us here get to heaven, I suspect there's going to be a lot there we didn't see coming! "Lord, don't you think it would be better if those conservatives weren't up here? You're being a little too liberal with that Amazing Grace stuff!"

Be on guard against all kinds of greed!

"What should I do? I know what I'll do. I'll tear down my barns and build larger ones! And I'll say to my soul, 'Soul! You have ample goods in store. Eat, drink, and be merry.'"

Fool! Life is not about you! Fool! Life is about being rich towards God! Rich towards God. What does that mean? I don't know! Could it mean thinking about God a little more. Praying to God a little more. I suppose it wouldn't hurt to have God on the agenda. Not a bad idea to know that there is a God and you're not it.

Rich towards God. What does that mean?

Well, the Jesus of Luke's Gospel says it's like a rich man who doesn't see the hungry and wounded Lazarus at his gate. And when both die, Lazarus flies up into the bosom of Abraham. And the rich man goes down into the torments of hell. "Father Abraham, send Lazarus to warn my brothers, so that they don't suffer this same fate!"

"They have the law and the prophets; they should see it coming. They know what to do. They know what to do about Gaza. They know what to do about Haiti. They know what to do about Somalia. They know what to do about Nashville. They know!"

Being rich towards God! What does that mean? The Jesus of Luke's Gospel says it this way! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, strength, and soul, and love your neighbor as yourself."

Who is my neighbor?

It's that beat-up Jew on the side of the road, that no one saw coming! And only one out of three sacrificed the day's agenda. Binding his wounds. Lifting him up on the donkey and giving him a ride. Taking care of him at the inn, paying the innkeeper to do the same, being all

in to helping the one who is other! Seeing the other as Holy! Be rich toward God is loving your neighbor!

What does that mean? The Jesus of Luke's Gospel tells about a boy who wants his share of the inheritance, and receives his share of the inheritance before the father is even dead. Blows his inheritance on himself. And when he's at the bottom, he says to himself, "I know what I'll do, for myself, I'll go to work for my father!" Because there's a man who gives his servants an abundance. And the boy comes over the hill home, and the father has only love. The father says, "I know what I'll do! Eat, drink, and be merry, for this son of mine was lost." That's when you have a party, when the lost are found and you grab everyone to celebrate! That's when you slaughter the fatted calf, eat, drink, and be merry with everyone at the table. The father has only love!

"LOVE, it does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends! (*1 Corinthians 13*)

There was a rich man whose land produced abundantly! So much! And so selfish. He talked to himself. He listened to himself. The answer to his problem was to build more self-storage! How much of your life is invested in self-storage?

Today, your life is demanded of you!

Jesus said, "I know!" And Jesus wants us to know that today, our lives are demanded of us. And so, we will give our lives... and the world will say, "What's all this love? What are we going to do with all this love? We never saw this coming!"

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