

St. Bartholomew                      10th Sun after Pente                      August 1, 2010

Luke 12:13-21

Today we have the opportunity to ponder just what life is all about. And one of the best ways to ponder what life is all about, is to go to the end of life - and look backward.

Last week I presided at the funeral of a lady. The funeral was held at the funeral home - and they had made up this beautiful video of a whole lot of pictures from her life. And the video showed these loving pictures of her with her husband and with her children - and friends and family. All of these beautiful pictures, one after another after another - with this beautiful music playing in the background.

You know, death has a way of clarifying life. When someone close to you dies - you tend to ask yourself what this life is really about. And I believe that, at least part of the answer, is in those pictures. It is in those pictures with all of the people who you have loved over the years - and those who have loved you. All those relationships - all those memories.

And you know what is interesting about all of those pictures? What is interesting about all of those pictures - is what is missing. I have never seen a picture of someone's beautiful house pictured in one of those funeral slide shows. I have never seen a picture of some beautiful car that they had - or their jewelry or their pretty clothes.

Noone yet has taken a picture of their elaborate entertainment system - and said, "Now THAT was Joe. He had the best entertainment system that money could buy." No, what you see is pictures of the family at that beach vacation. Or pictures of a prize buck - a reminder of the joys of hunting - sharing life with friends. You might see a picture of birthdays - Wedding days - family portraits. And you'll hear stories of laughter - funny incidents - or, maybe not. Maybe you will hear other kinds of stories.

So, my question to you today is.... How do you want to be remembered? Do you want to be remembered as the fun-loving dad who always had a moment to play with the kids? Do you want to be remembered as the loving husband or wife? Do you try to bless the people in your life? Are you gracious - are you forgiving? Are you generous? Are you willing to go out of your way for someone else?

Oh, none of us is perfect... I'm just bringing this up because of our gospel reading. In our gospel, Jesus tells the story about a man who forgot what life is really about. He is a rich man - and he has a wonderful, bountiful harvest. He runs out of room to store all of the wealth in his life... So the rich man says, "I know what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger barns! And then I will say to myself: Self, you are finally set - you have all the wealth you will ever

need. Now it's time to retire and relax and enjoy life!" And yet, that very night God says, "You fool! Tonight you will die - and all of this wealth - what good is it all? What have you done with it but hoard it and live in fear of the future."

That poor guy. He got all mixed up. And it can happen to any of us.... He got all mixed up - he thought that his life was about wealth. He got all mixed up - he thought that life was all about being secure and safe. He got all mixed up - he thought that life was all about working, working, working until you get to that day that you get to retire - and THEN you get to relax and enjoy life. That poor guy - he totally missed it.

The rich man forgot the people around him. He was so busy building up his wealth that he forgot the people in need in his community. He forgot the workers who were creating all of this wealth for him. He forgot everyone, but himself: "I know what I will do. I will tear down my old barns and build bigger barns. I'll move out of my modest house and build a mansion."

The truth is - possessions can possess you. Let me say that again - possessions can possess you. Your stuff can seriously influence the life you live and the decisions you make. For instance, if you have a big house and a lot of land - you have to take care of it. And that will take hours and hours of your life and time. If you have a hobby collecting and restoring old cars, it's going to take loads of time and money.

You might even have to buy or rent additional space to house them in. The same is true with horses and boats, hunting cabins and second homes.

Now that I have offended just about everyone, I want to tell you - I'm not necessarily saying that hobbies aren't good and blessed things. I'm simply saying - our gospel story is simply saying, that these things are not your life. And yet, you can easily come to believe that they are - because they can take so much of your life and time.

So, what is life all about? What is the measure of our life? What is it that people will remember about you? What will be scrolling across the screen at yours or my funeral?

It will be the people that you have known and have blessed. I remember one person at the funeral coming up to me afterwards - and they told me that when their mother had died at childbirth - Nadine Null had taken him in and raised him as her own. Wow, you don't get any higher praise than that.

Or this family who kept this lady and her children in their house for six months, even though they had to sleep on the living room floor. Because they thought the alcoholic husband was going to try to kill her.

Or the couple who chose to raise her grandchild, even though they were growing old - because their daughter, a single mother was too heavily into drugs.

Or the couple who adopted children so that they could give them a stable home until they grew up.

Or the man who bent over backward to bless his new stepson because the original father never cared.

These are the kinds of things that life is about. They are not things that bring you wealth or stability. They can actually cost you a bit. And yet, they are the stuff of life.

Jesus reminds us in our scripture for today, that it is not your wealth or your possessions that scroll across the screen at the end of your life - it is the people.

So, where is it, that you connect with people? Where is it that you have the chance to bless people? Where is it that you can show that you care? About the poor - about those who are in need in our community - or in your life....

Where is it that you can show you care - about the children - about the older folks in nursing homes or the sick. Or those poor guys in far away lands fighting for us.... or the veteran who has come home.

Where are the people that you can bless or love - or just show them that someone cares? It might take some time. It might take some motivation on your part.

It's just a question. But it could be THE question. It could be the question that reminds you what your life is REALLY all about. In the name of Jesus. In the service of Jesus. Amen