

If we have a dispute in some area today we usually try to find someone who can help solve it. According to New Testament scholars it wasn't uncommon then for people to take unsettled disputes to respected Rabbis. So the question begins our reading today wasn't all that strange.

**Luke 12:13-21: Someone in the crowd said to him, 'Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.' 14 Jesus replied, 'Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?'**

We don't know who the man was; he may have been a younger brother who'd been diddled out of what was to be a shared inheritance. We don't know the answer, what we do know is that Jesus felt drawn to comment

**Then he said to them, 'Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.'**

Addressing the crowd Jesus said – watch out for all kinds of greed, although he qualifies this by applying greed to the gathering of stuff. I read in the Listener this week that the average New Zealand house size has gone from 107 sq. m. to 175 sq. m. in the last decade and in 2012 it hit 200 sq. m. That figure will surely increase; people have to put their stuff somewhere.

That's one issue Jesus addresses – the abundance of possessions; the other is that life doesn't consist in this. We know this intellectually but I'm not always sure we know this in our hearts. And I'm not trying to make anyone feel guilty.

I've observed from a distance the struggle it has been for many in our community as they've gone from a 3-5-bedroom family dwelling to a one bedroom unit or single room unit in a retirement village to a single room in a rest home.

I sense this is in front of lots of us; I used to think Trudy was the hoarder but as I come to the end of 42 years in this expression of my vocation I've come to realise we're not so different. So far, I've kept all the sermons I've written, the weddings and funerals I've taken; every chapel talk at John McGlashan; every speaking engagement – BMF annual meetings. Youth, BB and GB devotions etc. etc. And then there are the books and magazines and articles except one I can't find; **'will we still be adolescents at 65?'**

What I have noticed over the years, apart from the Pyramids that is; there's not a lot of storage room in a coffin! Have you observed this?

I won't talk about other kinds of greed because Jesus then has a story to tell us.

As if to emphasise his point Jesus says

**'The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. 17 He thought to himself, "What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops."**

**18 'Then he said, "This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. 19 And I'll say to myself, 'You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.'"**

**20 'But God said to him, "You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?"**

**21 'This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich towards God.'**

Note – he was already rich – probably means in our day he had a fridge and a car – if you have those things you're in the top 4% of the world's population. I suspect he had a whole lot more.

He planted his crops – fair enough, at that point he was being a diligent farmer, but it was one of the 7 plenty years in Egypt and he reaped a packet.

Did he have a choice at this point? Jesus doesn't say – let's read the story again by colouring in some words.

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I, I, I..... Apparently at this time he was heard to sing – 'I'm coming back to the heart of worship cos it's all about me, it's all about me.'

This is about me; this is for me; this will make me greatly wealthy and for the rest of my life I'll be able to live of this; have a great life – eat, drink and be merry. And like some in our country today and throughout the world it looked as though it would all come to pass.

Home free!

But there's a sting in the tail

**20 'But God said to him, "You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?"**

**21 'This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich towards God.'**

Whoops! He thought he had it all covered.

On one level this is a story; on another level this is the truth. The unexpected happens; things don't work out as we think they will and all the plans in the world can't help the inevitable encroaching of death.

For us, I suspect, the most interesting statement in the whole story is:

**'This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich towards God.'**

Well it depends: who do you think your life belongs to? Is it all about you? Rich towards God – what does God need? And how can we be rich towards God - time, resources, gifts and love.

We thought about this in the early part of the year; not sure how we're going with this – love to have some feedback.

**Bless others including those who are not yet believers**

**Eat with others including those who are not yet believers**

**Learn Jesus – he is God's great gift**

**Listen to the Spirit – what are you saying to me God in this situation**

**Go where he sends us**

I believe there is a resistance that needs to be broken in us. This is how we can be rich towards God!