

Sermon for 31<sup>st</sup> July 2016.

The stories in the readings today are all connected by the invisible cord of love that flows from God into his beloved creation.

The Old Testament reading is about the father child relationship between Israel and God and how God continues in compassion despite Israel's ingratitude.

The psalm sings out about thanksgiving for deliverance from many troubles.

The epistle, speaks about the new life in Christ

and how we are to get rid of the earthly things that overtake us

and how we are to claim the very renewal in which Christ is all and in all!

And in the **Gospel** reading we hear Jesus teach his disciples about dependence in the parable

about the rich fool who builds bigger barns to store his worldly possessions thinking that his provision will bring him joy and contentment in life.

The gospel story speaks about a very intimate relationship that the rich man has with himself

and we hear this in the conversation that he has with his soul.

He tells his soul that his provision is so good that he can sit back and relax –drink and be merry'.

Have you ever had a conversation with yourself like that ?

If I'm honest I think I might have in my earlier life. -

When I read how frequently in this verse, the foolish rich man used the personal pronoun **I** and the possessive **my** - it was clear to see that he only had eyes for himself.

In his vision of life itself, he **saw** only himself – he wouldn't, or couldn't see beyond his self-image and into the truth about the Grace of God in his life and neither could he see his neighbour.

It is of interest to know I believe, that this gospel passage was constructed by the gospel writer using the sayings of Jesus, in the late first Century and in response to internal trouble within Jesus' group of followers who, when threatened by times of trouble brought about by opposing forces both internally and externally, were prone to fall back into the way of human desire for storing up possessions for their own security.

The passage is a warning against the futility of seeking refuge from times of trouble by amassing possessions.

It is a warning about taking over from God and relying solely on the self, and as such it holds great relevance for every era in time.

Now continuing in this context, we might say that we in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century are particularly vulnerable to taking over control of our lives, for times of trouble abound -both in the religious world and in the secular world.

I'm sure we are all familiar with the failings of the church, some of which are presently and constantly being revealed in the royal commission into institutional child abuse.

In such exposure we are faced with the church's historic failure to nurture and protect our most vulnerable precious youth.

And I'm sure you know about fundamentalist religion at its most extreme, and the terrorists who murder the innocent hoping to destroy the very nature of free will, gifted by the very God whom they claim to know and love.

And I'm sure you know something about the ups and downs of the world economics that seem to benefit the wealthy nations and by pass those nations who are most in need.

Yes there is plenty in our era that we can claim to be times of trouble.

Plenty to lead us away from God and more deeply into the ways of self-centred control and provision.

Yet these are the very times when we are to stay close to God and seek to grow our communion together for this is the true shining light in our lives in all times.

Times of trouble and times of joy.

For only in God can we see beyond the fear that promotes self-centred control and beyond the illusion that things are so doable that we can make it on our own -

Only in God are we enabled a clear vision of ourselves and our neighbour.

Only in God do we become the new creation in Christ that Paul speaks about in the epistle this morning.

The gospel today is saying to us I believe, not that we can't make some provision for our life, for this too is our moral responsibility, but that we are to live in communion with God first and foremost, and that our response to all matters, in times of trouble and in times of joy, flow out of this intimacy.

The message here is about God as the corner stone of our life.

It is a reminder not to forget this and it invites our personal reflection on our own priority in life.

Let us pray together. Dear Lord we give ourselves to you - for in you we live, and move and have our being.

We pray that our dependence upon you is reflected in our richness towards you.

May we each live with a generosity of heart,  
a generosity of soul and a generosity of being  
as we come together as the body of Christ in your church.

In Christs name we pray, Amen.