

# “The Man with Six I’s”

Luke 12:13-21, Proper 13-C

July 31, 2016

One thing that preachers never really know for sure when they are preaching is—who is listening and who is not! Sometimes, the fault may be attributed to the preacher—who is just too plain, just too dull and absolutely irrelevant. At other times the fault may be attributed to the people in the pews, who are just too tired to genuinely listen to the sermon! All preachers probably have some pretty tall stories to tell—but none can top that of St. Paul and the experience he had one evening, while preaching in a city called Troas. Paul, who had gone there to preach the Gospel, had now been there for seven days. It was his last night of preaching in Troas—and because he still had some important spiritual truths he wanted to share with the people—his sermon was longer than usual. Luke tells us rather “tactfully,” that Paul’s preaching was “prolonged!” Paul was still preaching at midnight, when a young man, named Eutychus, who was sitting on a window ledge on the third floor of that three-story building—fell asleep and fell completely out of the building to his certain death below! It was the first time on record that anyone had been literally bored to death by a sermon.

But St. Paul so full of the RESURRECTION LIFE of the Holy Son of God goes down those three flights of stair so that under the Son’s power he might raise this young man to go downstairs and to raise Eutychus from the dead.

When it came to preaching the Word of God, the New Testament makes plain to us that our Lord Jesus Christ was in a class uniquely his own! In Mark 12 we read that “people heard him gladly.” And in Matthew 7 we read that “people were astonished at his preaching because he taught them as one who had authority and now as one of the teachers of the law.”

Nevertheless, there must have been times when people even turned a deaf ear to Jesus. This certainly seems to have been the situation in our Gospel lesson today! For right in the middle of our Lord’s message—this unnamed man shouted out loud to Jesus, “*Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me*” (Luke 12:13)! That’s when Jesus yelled back to him, “*Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?*” Then Jesus directed his words to the whole mass of people who were gathered in front of him there that day: “*Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possession*” (Vv. 14-15)

Jesus was not discounting the fact that this man may have had a legitimate “beef” or that good Jewish people often went to the “experts in the law” to settle their civil disputes. But quite frankly this was not Jesus’ primary mission in the world. “Man” our Lord called back to him, “who made me the judge or the arbitrator over you!”

Sometimes when parents die, the settlement of their estate may bring out the worst among the surviving siblings. Jesus was not denying this. But Jesus was concerned about peoples’ souls and wanted them always where the truest JOYS in life are to be found!

So NEXT then, Jesus proceeds to share with his disciples a parable about “A RICH MAN’S POOR RETIREMENT PLAN.”

Jesus told them a hard-working farmer; a fellow who was smart, solid and square with the world. This guy was not only a good worker, he was blessed by God. His fields received rain when some precipitation was really needed! His fields received sunshine when his crops needed sunshine! When the rain came, it was never such a hard rain that it flooded his fields or so sparse that the tender little plants, when they were first poking their tiny little heads out of the ground, shriveled up and died!

At the end of the summer, it became apparent to that farmer that the yield on his crops was going to be better for him that year than at any other time throughout his whole career! He must have certainly been excited. He was most definitely expecting a bumper crop and a windfall if ever there had been one! The excitement this farmer was experiencing would have rank right up there a person’s winning the lottery today, or of a person indeed finding that pot of gold at the end of the rainbow!

This farmer's soon-to-be unparalleled success was presenting him, however, with a gigantic problem. There's no way his present barns could hold that much grain! There's no way his present silos would do! Did you hear the question then that this farmer asked himself somewhat privately? *"What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?"*

It never even crossed this man's mind that there might be plenty of other people out there who were poor and had no bread to put upon their tables. It never dawned on him that out of his great abundance he could have shared some of that food with people who were hungry and needy! And why do you think that was? Because there was no room for God in his life, there was no room in his life for other people either! Have you ever noticed that there's a great correlation between our relationship with God and our relationships with other people? St. John tells us, *"If a man says he loves God but hates his brother he is a liar! For if a man does not love his brother whom he can see, how can he love God whom he cannot see" (1 John 4:20)!*

Unfortunately this man was suffering from a serious case of "eye" trouble! Yes, Eye Trouble, as in "E-Y-E" TROUBLE, BUT HE READY DIDN'T SEE ANYBODY ELSE WHO'S LIFE MATTER, BUT HIS OWN! But if he was suffering from "eye" trouble he was suffering from a far worse case of "I" trouble with the word "I" here not being spelled "e-y-e" but like the ninth letter of the ENGLISH ALPHABET—THE FIRST PERSON, PERSONAL PRONOUN "I"!

The trouble with this man is that he was a man with six "I"s! Just listen to his own admission in all of this: *"What shall I do? I have no room! I will do this!*

*I will pull down my barns! There I will store all my crops!*

*Finally, "I will say to my soul!"*

The only solution this rich farmer could come up with to his great dilemma was to tear down his barns and build bigger ones and this is precisely what he did! But even then, he still kept boasting about: "MY" crops, "MY" barns, "MY" grain, "MY" goods, but BEFORE WE CASTIGATE THIS RICH FARMER TOO QUICKLY TO BE IN A CATEGORY ALL BY HIMSELF, can't we also --- so easily forget too, that we aren't really owners of anything.

God is the OWNER OF EVERYTHING and all that we have is merely HIS on loan to us from him while we are here!

Sometimes we may become so preoccupied with storing up for ourselves treasures here on earth that we forget all about storing up for ourselves treasures in heaven. Do we remember Jesus's words in his Sermon on the Mount: *"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth!"*? The most accurate translation of the Greek text here would be: *"Do not JUST KEEP ON LAYING UP FOR YOURSELVES TREASURES HERE ON EARTH, where moth and rust corrupt and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust corrupts and thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:19-21)!*

The real problem with this man as Jesus was capturing it in his parable FOR HERE is that he was SO ABSOLUTELY FOCUSED ON BECOMING RICH IN THE THINGS OF THIS EARTH, THAT HE NEVER GAVE ANY CONSCIOUS THOUGHT TO HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD AT ALL!

He, like the young man who interrupted Jesus' sermon perhaps, had no idea about the MORE ABUNDANT LIFE THAT GOD HAS COME INTO THIS WORLD TO GIVE US IN THE GIFT OF HIS SON! You remember how Jesus says in his "Good Shepherd Discourse" one day: *"I have come that you might have life and have it more abundantly!" (John 10:10)*

This rich farmer, for all of his astuteness, was still completely ignorant when it came to spiritual things. IF HE WAS GOING TO LIVE HAPPILY EVER AFTER, HE WASN'T GOING TO LIVE HAPPILY EVER AFTER HERE ON EARTH! No one lives happily ever after in this fallen world!

Why not? Because unfortunately, with time, many people eventually get sick and they die. Others may suddenly become victims in a fatal automobile accident! Death comes to people in countless different ways. Even those brave men and women who have signed up VOLUNTARILY TO SERVE OUR NATION AND THE CAUSE OF FREEDOM—THROUGH THEIR JOINING THE ARMED FORCES sometimes die in their defense of freedom on a foreign battlefield. But in time,

maybe just because—our bodies are worn out and are no longer functioning nearly as well as they did when we were in our 20's—our hearts stop beating one day and then we die!

This is what happened to our rich farmer. On the very night he thought he genuinely had it “Made in the Shade” and was at long last now living on “Easy Street,” he died. And according to Jesus’ own words in this little story, God the Father in heaven said to him, *“Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be”* (v. 20)? And then Jesus said to all who were standing there that day: *“So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God”* (v. 21)!

You know, every time I read this story, the Holy Spirit of God prompts me to pause long enough to remember that: I've got a God, a Heavenly Father, Whose Name is Love. He is absolutely wonderful. Long ago, knowing just how helpless I was to save myself from sin's domination of my life, from death and the evil enticements of that old evil foe, He sent His Son to save me and God sent his Son into this world to save you too! You are a sinner the same as me! You need a Helper, a Friend, a Savior—the same as I do!

According to God's own ancient prophecy—the Promised Savior of the world was to be born in Bethlehem and Jesus was. He grew up and 100% completed the mission that the Father in heaven had given to him concerning his purpose in this life. He did all that was necessary to redeem us from sin, death and the power of the devil. By his dying on the cross and being raised to new life again—he came to put God at the very CENTER OF OUR WORLD, AT THE VERY CENTER OF OUR HEARTS AND MINDS AGAIN!

Even though today, as I am standing here before you as I joyfully share this message with you in relative ease and comfort, that's not how it was for our Lord! For Jesus to live out these words, required of him horrendous pain, suffering and a cruel death that he would experience by his crucifixion on the cross!

Groups of people were continually trying to make Him look like a fool. Just about anything He said, somebody would take it and turn it and twist it—and do their best to put their own “spin” upon it! Some organizations went so far as to send special emissaries to wherever it was that Jesus was at---to question and interview Him. They wanted to “get” Him on something, anything...anything that could either discredit him or make him disappear. All of his opponents were out to make him look bad, or just go away. Eventually, almost all of them decided Jesus had to “die.”

Now that's pretty strong stuff when you realize Jesus had never done anything wrong. True, He had healed people from their diseases! Passionately, He had talked to them about the kingdom of heaven! Lovingly, he told repentant sinners that their sins were forgiven. Nevertheless, unfair trials, perjured witnesses, trumping up false charges against him all ended up putting Jesus to death on the cross. There, willingly, innocently, Jesus gave up His life. There, willingly, innocently, Jesus died. He died carrying your sins and my sins and everybody else's sin to the cross too. Then, having done all that had been required of him, on the third day He rose from the dead. Amazingly and wonderfully, Jesus lives and because he lives you and I may also live! You see, as the Bible talks about it, faith in Christ as your Savior is the only real key to living happily-ever-after!

Jesus is speaking to us about the Heavenly Father's desire to have a personal relation with you and you and you and me and with every person alive in the whole world! But the life he wants us to enjoy, our Savior has just told us—does not consist in the abundance of our possessions.

JESUS IS SPEAKING TO EVERY ONE OF US ABOUT OUR EXPERIENCING A TRUE SENSE OF CONTENTMENT IN LIFE, A CONTENTMENT THAT CAN NEVER BE OURS—APART FROM A LIVING, VITAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE GOD WHO CREATED HEAVEN AND EARTH!

Paul came to know about this life and so many of you here today have experienced it for yourselves as well! In I Timothy 6:6-10, Paul writes: *“Godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into this world, and we cannot take anything out of it when we leave. But if we have FOOD AND CLOTHING WITH THESE WE WILL BE CONTENT. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. It is through this craving that some have*

wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs! --- And Paul continues in I Timothy 6:17—19, *“Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment!”*

Friends, no matter whatever it is that you and I may be able to acquire for ourselves in this world, apart from God, it will never bring us any true sense of contentment. Just as there are important times when those in business need to create time to do a personal inventory on all that they have, we Christians need to take time for some spiritual inventories of our own! What part does God play in my life these days? Is our focus really on him or solely on ourselves!?!

One day a father and a daughter were sharing their last moments together at a very busy airport. This was back in those days when family members and friends could actually accompany the ticketed-passenger all the way to the departure gate. The attendant behind the counter announced that it was time for all passengers to board the plane. That’s when this father with tears in his eyes and his daughter with tears in her eyes hugged one another and kissed each other goodbye. The father’s final words to his daughter were: “I love you and I wish you enough.” The daughter’s final words to her father were: “I love you and wish you enough!”

That’s when they kissed each other and she left. The father walked over toward the big plate-glass window, still eyeing the plane, which his beloved daughter had just now boarded. He turned to another man who was standing nearby and asked this stranger: “Did you ever say goodbye to someone knowing that it would be forever?”

“Yes, I have,” the stranger replied. “Forgive me for asking,” he continued, “but why is this one a ‘forever’ goodbye?”

“I am old and she lives, pretty much, completely on the other side of the world. Airfare that far away is extremely expensive. The next trip, for my daughter, back here to the States could very well be for my funeral!”

“Excuse me again, for asking, but I couldn’t help but overhear you saying to your daughter, ‘I wish you enough,’ even as you she said to you in return that she wished you enough. May I ask you, ‘What does that really mean?’”

At that moment the sad father began to smile. “This is a wish that has been handed down in my family for generations. My parents used to say it to everyone.” The father then paused for a moment then looking at this curious stranger more intently, he continued: “When we said to each other, ‘I wish you enough,’ we were expressing our hope that both of us would always a life filled with just enough good things to sustain us!” Then the father looking at the other man proceeded to quote a verse!”

“I wish you enough sun to keep your attitude bright.  
I wish you enough rain to appreciate the sun more.  
I wish you enough happiness to keep your spirit alive.  
I wish you enough pain so that the smallest joys in life appear much bigger.  
I wish you enough gain to satisfy your wanting.  
I wish you enough loss to appreciate all that you possess.  
I wish enough “Hello’s” to get you through the final “Goodbye.”  
He then began to sob and walked away.  
My friends, I wish you enough! AMEN