

## Commentary on the Gospel for Mon, Oct 20th 2014

The rich landowner in Jesus's parable sounds like so many of us – he is simply trying to save for a rainy day! Yes, there is a certain hyperbole at work here (is it not a bit ostentatious to tear down all your barns and build larger ones?). But if we're honest with ourselves (and our IRA plans), we would likely admit that we spend much of our lives seeking security. The temptation is so great – if only I can "store up good things for many years," I can then relax and enjoy life! The farmer has forgotten a crucial point, of course: his harvest is not his own, and neither is his life. We are not our own masters, nor do we have an "inalienable" right to "our" property. It is telling that in his rush to hoard the harvest, the farmer never thinks of sharing the surplus.

So this parable is clearly about the dangers of greed; Jesus says as much. But I also see another temptation: the propensity to plan. This is an ingrained habit in my American culture. As the maxim states, "those who fail to plan, plan to fail." Before my first trip to Africa a decade ago, I kept pestering my Ugandan mentor, "What will I be doing in Uganda?" He laughed. "Ahh, you are thinking like an American! The key question is one of being, not doing." And this is where today's reading from Ephesians is so illuminating. As Paul makes clear, the issue is not what we have done for God. Rather, the key point is what God's love and mercy have done for us. "But God, who is rich in mercy, because of the great love he had for us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, brought us to life with Christ..."

At the end of the day, we have no ultimate security in this world; none of us gets out of here alive. In turn, our efforts to carefully choreograph our lives can give us false illusions of autonomy and control that occlude our fundamental dependency on God and each other. The good news, as Jesus reminds us, is that "our lives are much more than possessions." It is not "what we have" but "whose we are" that truly matters. As the Psalmist sings, "the Lord made us, we belong to him."

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