

Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2025: BCP Benefice Holy Communion, Stonegrave.

Some words said in the parable today, “This very night your life is being demanded of you.”

What is demanding and taking your life today? That is the question for us all today.

It is not a question about physical health or illnesses, or about when or how we might die. It is a question about something bigger and more important than that, it is about the way we are living now, our life today, this moment.

That’s what is happening to the landowner in Jesus’ parable. He is storing up without any attention to or awareness of what really gives life, and consequently, his essential life is ebbing away. Some will think the words, “This very night your life is being demanded of you.”, are about God’s judgement and wrath, but that’s not what the text says. It simply says, “Your life is being demanded of you.” God is not the one making a demand on the man, God is simply stating what happens when we store things up without any attention to or awareness of what really gives life? In other words, it is the relentless storing up the grain that is demanding the man’s life

So, what do you store up? What things in our lives consume us and eventually demand our life? It could be material wealth or possessions, or it can be feelings of anger, grudges, resentment, guilt or regrets, pride or arrogance. It could be a need for approval, attention, or recognition, self-obsession, the need to be right, and to have the final word. It could be criticism, condemnation, or judgment of others or fear, worry, or anxiety, or to have power and control. It could be the need to succeed at any cost, the desire for good reputation, or to bully.

What else would you add to this list? What about religious stuff? A narrow minded or bigoted misguided sense of mission, a judgemental and unloving attitude towards people who think differently to you, or an over-inflated sense of your own standing with God?

Maybe we don't always realise but the fact is that whatever we store up for ourselves eventually demands our life - emotionally, spiritually, and sometimes physically. Think about a time your stored up anger or resentment and the way it began to eat away at your life or a time when you stored up judgment or condemnation of yourself or someone else, or fear of worry. We were not created to be people who hoard and store up. That is not the way or teaching of Jesus. He taught that when you pray say, "Give us each day our daily bread." Not bread for a week, a month, or a lifetime, but bread today.

We are reminded of this prior to the offertory today, from Matthew's Gospel, "*Lay not up for yourselves treasure upon the earth; where the rust and moth doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven; where neither rust nor moth doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal.*"

Storing up is not about quantity. It is an attitude that ebbs away life, a way of distancing and cutting ourselves off from each other, destroying community and relationships because when we hoard and store up, life becomes only about us. Listen to the man in the Gospel's conversation and how many times he uses the words "I or 'my'. There is no mention of or concern for anyone but himself. His storing up has blinded him to what really matters. As the final sentence of the Gospel reading says, "*So it is with*

*those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich towards God."*

In other words, life is not about what we store up but the things that hold the deepest meaning, value, and purpose – love, compassion, mercy, forgiveness, justice. These cannot be hoarded and stored up; they can only be given away. That's what we see in the life of Jesus. His was not a life that stored up, it was a life given freely for others.

In his letter St Paul reiterates this, *"Seek the things that are above,"* and *"Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, put to death therefore what is earthly in you."* That doesn't mean as it is sometimes said, 'being so heavenly minded that you are no earthly good'. It means reminding ourselves each day that at our baptism God buried us and raised us up. There our sinful self, the part that makes us want to store up and in doing so block out the world, died and the true self emerged. Paul said as much in chapter 2 of Colossians: *"You have been buried with Christ in baptism, in which you were also raised with him."* And now in Colossians 3, Paul repeats, *"For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God."*

Paul says, 'You've been baptized. You now are a new you, in Christ.' Heaven is open to us. Through Christ, we have been given a new life, an eternal life. Because of Christ, we don't have to store up anymore, because all we need is in Christ now and forever.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

