

Homily (notes) from Canon Philip Dyson  
**31st July 2022 - 18th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Readings (Year C): 1st: Ecclesiastes 1:2; 2:21-23. Psalm: 89. 2nd: Colossians 3:1-5. 9-11.

**Gospel:** Luke 12:13-21.

As we welcome our holiday makers, time off, time away, time to relax, as we hear the gospel, we probably think, is this right. Yes it is right to have a holiday, and change and relax. So don't worry.

It is a plea from a man in the crowd, for Jesus to arbitrate in a property dispute, becomes the occasion for further instruction on the way of following Christ. Jesus not only heard the man's plea but also the inner voice of a soul too concerned about material possessions. Greed can obscure the soul's need for God.

St Paul in the 2<sup>nd</sup> reading says that greed is the worship of a false God.

This story of the rich farmer is the only parable in any gospel in which God speaks. And the first word attributed to God is not too complimentary; he calls the rich man 'Fool'.

Jesus uses the incident with the man in the crowd to teach that a person's life is not made secure by what he owns. Of course it isn't: we all know we can't take it with us when we die.

At one level the farmer had done nothing wrong. He is an example of what is good; good husbandry, good harvesting, good planning, no doubt hard work. His weakness is shown when he declares his proposal on the strength of this bumper crop to retire from work and devote the rest of his life to pleasure.

The abundance of the things which he possessed did not lead him to adopt a better or fuller life, still less to give anything away. Instead it encouraged him to think only of material things and self-indulgence. It was his attitude that was wrong.

The man's first and only thought was neither to give thanks to God, nor to share it with others, but keep it all for himself. It gave him the illusion that he was in control of his life. He could eat, drink and have a good time with no thought of the future. Possession rich, he was spiritually bankrupt.

He hadn't looked 'for the things of heaven', as St Paul urged – and the word 'look' here doesn't mean 'glance at' but turn your will to it'. Totally selfish: 'I', me, my, he says.

It is back as I ever remind to the cross: the 'I' crossed out. Selfishness crossed out, arms open wide to others.

As I prepared this, I was aware of the season of Creation coming up in September. All of us aware too of climate change, and then I read that 'CAFOD warns that up to 20 million people are fighting for their lives in Ethiopia, Kenya and South Sudan. This is down to the spiralling cost of food and the fact that the region is facing the worst drought in 40 years.'

The Archbishop of Nairobi, Kenya, the Most Reverend Philip Anyolo, says that malnutrition levels have risen, millions of people are now in need of assistance, and explains to the international community that "it is the Gospel mandate to respond." We hear also of so much grain produced by Ukraine unable to be exported because of the war.

Holiday-makers, everyone do not go away depressed; but challenged as ever by the Scriptures of today, for the Lord has been our refuge.

Here we seek to make ourselves rich in the sight of God, and there is only Christ: he is everything and he is in everything.