

Ok, I want you to raise your hand if you expect to go to heaven when you die...Alright, now if you think you're going to hell, stand up...One time when I did this one man did stand up,...and I asked him, "Do you really think you're going to hell?"...And he answered, "Uh, not really, Deacon Ron, but I hated to see you standing up all alone."...Wise guy...Now recent polls show that about 90% of Americans expect to go to heaven. ...When I saw that number, it made me wonder if many of us take heaven for granted...We all want to get there, right?...But are we ready if God calls us today?...Some of us are, ...some of us might need a little tweaking...and some of us might need a bit more work...In today's Gospel, Jesus uses a parable to warn us that we better have our priorities right when God calls us, or - like the rich farmer in the parable, ...we might find ourselves left out in the cold....Uh, actually it's more likely to be Hot,Hot,Hot!

Jesus uses this story to help us see that our life doesn't consist of our possessions... what we have, what we've accumulated...I can be rich in the things of the world ...I can be poor in the things of the world,....but none of that matters to God...The only thing that matters is that I am rich in the things that are important to God...Jesus wants us to know that if we're like the rich farmer in the parable, spending so much time and energy trying to get enough money and things and stuff to ensure a good life TOMORROW,...we will miss out on the opportunities of TODAY,...the opportunities to do those things that matter most to God... because - face it - today is the only day that's for sure...TOMORROW may never come.

You know, I'm convinced that one of Satan's favorite words is "TOMORROW"...He must love it when he hears us say things like, "I'll take care of that TOMORROW,...I'm going to get my life back on the right track TOMORROW, ... I'll stop all the lying TOMORROW,...I'll start going to church again TOMORROW",...because the thing is, TODAY is the only day that is guaranteed ...We can't do anything yesterday...and we don't know if we'll be around tomorrow...When we wake up in the morning, God gives us the gift of one day - TODAY - to do what God wants us to do...to do something that matters to the One who has given us this gift.

There's a song by country music star Tim McGraw from a few years ago, that's .based on the life of his estranged father...It's about a man in his early 40's who has just learned that he's only got a short time to live...and just before he dies, a friend asks him,... "How'd it hit you when you got that kind of news?...Man, what did-ja do?"...The dying man tells him that the bad news he got was a gift, ...that he used the time he had left to love deeper...and to speak sweeter,...to give forgiveness he had been holding back,...to be the husband and father that most of the time he hadn't been,...to read the Bible and take a good hard look at what he'd do if he could do it all again. ...And then he says, "I hope you get the chance to live like you are dyin'." ...That's what Jesus wants us to do,...live each day as if it may be our last...and not wait for the next day to do the things that matter to God....

Today we can tell those we love how we feel about them...**Today** we can forgive that person who hurt us...**Today** we can say "I'm sorry," to the one we hurt...**Today** we can get serious about kicking that sinful habit we've become a slave to... **Today** we can get off our butt and get

involved in that cause we feel so strongly about ..**Today** we can get right with God, go to Confession, and start all over... **TODAY!** Because we may not get the chance **TOMORROW**..

Now there's another more subtle message in Jesus' parable...Did you notice that the farmer had taken in a harvest so plentiful that he had to build more barns to store all the grain,...and he was storing it only for himself?...He gave no thought to helping any of his neighbors whose crops hadn't done so well....And did you notice that he didn't give God any credit for his good fortune? ...It's like he was saying, "Look what I have accomplished...Look at what my fields have produced."...Didn't he see the hand of God in all this?...Hadn't God blessed him with fertile soil...and kept the crops free of blight and disease? ...Hadn't God given him months of good weather, and provided workers to plant and harvest the tons of grain?...Sure, the farmer had put in a lot of work and sweat, ...but he wasn't giving God any credit for what God had done. Where was his thankfulness?...Where was his gratitude?

As I ask these questions of the farmer in the parable,...I need to ask them of myself, because I spend more time complaining to God,...than I do thanking God for the blessings in my life...How about you? ...How often do we stop to realize how well off we are?...Did you know that if we can go out and get a Big Mac with fries, we are wealthier than 75% of the world's population? ...Do you complain like I do when your shower's taking so long to get hot, or when the Internet goes down?...Yet even when we take blessings like these for granted, God doesn't stop showering us with more of them every day, more than we deserve,...& we don't always appreciate them until one of them is taken away.

There's an old Jewish story: *It's about a man who goes to his rabbi and complains, "Rabbi, my life is unbearable....There are nine of us living in one room. What can I do?"...The wise old rabbi answers, "Take your goat into the room with you"...The man says, "The goat? Rabbi, you must be joking."... But the rabbi insists: "Do as I say and come back in a week." ... A week later the man comes back looking more distraught than before... He tells the rabbi: "We can't stand it... The goat is filthy and he smells."....The rabbi then tells him, "Go home. Let the goat out. Come back in a week." ...A week later, the man returns to the rabbi, smiling ear to ear, "Rabbi, life is beautiful again. The nine of us are enjoying every minute of it... now that there is no goat."... The situation was exactly the same as before, but the man didn't know how good he had it until it got worse.*

I hope none of us needs a filthy, smelly goat to come live with us to make us realize how good we have it... We **know** how blessed we are,...but we also know we can do better at thanking God for all He has given us...And that's the purpose of this Eucharistic Celebration...The word "eucharist" means *thanksgiving*, ...And we've come here to thank and praise God for all that He has blessed us with:...our health,...our skills & talents, ...our ability to work,...our home and family, ...our possessions...Everything, ...and especially the gift of His Son Jesus Christ....So much to thank God for every day...But, you know what God wants more than our THANKSGIVING? ...God wants our **THANKSLIVING!** What is **THANKSLIVING?**

THANKSLIVING is living in a way that doesn't take for granted all God has done for me...

THANKSLIVING is being grateful for how God strengthens me when troubles hit...

THANKSLIVING is **living** my **thanks** by using the gifts and blessings I've received not just for my benefit – like the farmer in the parable did - but to benefit others,... to help them know that God loves them.

My friends, our God is a giver...who gives and gives and gives...and Jesus tells us, "From everyone who is given much,... much is expected."... We have been given much,...and so we have much to give...The best way we can give thanks to God is to live all of our **todays** doing what matters to God, ...giving to others as God has given to us, ...so that when our last **today** comes,...what we leave behind won't be measured by how much grain we've stored in our barns, ...but by the lives we made better...by the lives we helped to know God....by how we gave,... by how we loved....AMEN!