

There are very few Bible quotes that have the same impact as two we just heard in today's Gospel...1<sup>st</sup> we have Jesus telling the crowd, "Be careful to guard against greed...for though one may be rich, ...life doesn't consist of possessions."...Then in His parable, Jesus has God saying to the rich farmer, "You fool! This night your life will be demanded of you."...Once again, Jesus is telling the people – and us: "Get your priorities right, ...decide what is important in life...before it's too late...because it can all end just like that."...In the parable, the farmer had all these big plans to store the bumper crop his farm had produced and to live off it for many years...to "eat, drink and be merry."...He had all that he needed to live a life of pleasure and plenty...He was rich in the things of this world,...but he was a "fool" because – as Jesus tells it – when death came suddenly, he was not rich in the things that matter to God....The tragic part of the rich farmer's story is that he thought he had it made, ...that he was set to live like a king, ...but he hadn't given a thought to the fact that someday – as for all of us – earthly life will come to an end,...And knowing that should affect how we live this day – today.

In telling the parable of the RICH FOOL,... Jesus is making the point that "Our life doesn't consist of our possessions."...What we have isn't who we are...He cautions us not to spend too much time and energy in the pursuit of money and things and stuff...He doesn't want us so concerned with accumulating and storing up enough stuff to ensure a good life TOMORROW, that we miss out on the blessings and opportunities of TODAY,...because TODAY is the only day that is guaranteed...The good life – the life rich in what matters to God– is living as if today is the only day we have to live.

You know what might be one of the most dangerous words in the English Language?: TOMORROW! ..."Oh, I'll take care of that TOMORROW!"..."I'll get myself right with God TOMORROW!"...I'll patch things up with so and so TOMORROW!"...But here's the thing: TODAY is the only day that's guaranteed. ...It's the one day we have to do those things that matter most to God. ...We don't know about tomorrow....Tomorrow is totally in God's hands...Only God knows if TOMORROW will even come...The gift God gives us is the gift of one day – TODAY - to do something that matters to God,...to do something that matters to the ONE who has given us this gift.

I love country music, because a lot of country songs are about real life, real feelings and emotions...Like a song by country star Tim McGraw from a few yrs ago, based on the life of his estranged father...It's about a man in his early 40's who has just learned that he had only a short time to live...And just before he dies, someone asks him, "How'd it hit you when you get that kind of news?...Man, whataja 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 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'." ...Isn't that what Jesus wants us to do,...live each day as if it may be our last...to not wait for the next day to do the things that matter to God? ...Today is the time to tell those we love how we feel about them...Today is the time to 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 been hanging on to...Today we can have that talk with our son or daughter or spouse....that we keep putting off...Today we can

do more than talk abt that cause we feel so strongly about,...& get off our butt & start working for it!...TODAY! ...Because we may not get the chance tomorrow.

Now there's another message for us in Jesus' parable...Did you notice that the farmer who had taken in a harvest so plentiful that he had to build bigger barns to store it in, didn't seem to have any thought of sharing his abundance?...He was storing it away only for himself...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 done...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 good, 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 when things go badly ...than I do thanking God for all the good things in my life...And I bet a lot of you can say the same thing, huh?... 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 and fries, we are wealthier than 75% of the world's population?...How many of us have opened the refrigerator and complained because it was so full we couldn't fit something else in it?...Yet even though we take our blessings for granted, it doesn't keep God from showering us with blessings every day,...more than we can count, ...more than we deserve.... And we don't always appreciate these blessings until one of them is taken away.

There's an old Jewish story you've probably heard me tell before: *It's about a man who goes to the rabbi and complains, "Rabbi, my life is unbearable.... There are 9 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, "What? 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... The 9 of us are enjoying every minute of it now that there is no goat." The situation was the same as before, but now the man realized how blessed he was to begin with.*

I hope none of us needs a dirty, smelly goat living with us to make us realize how good we have it....We **know** how blest we are,...but we also know we can do better at thanking our gracious God for all He has given us...And we can start right here – right now - during this Eucharistic Celebration. ...The word "eucharist" means thanksgiving,...and the main purpose of our being here is for you and me to get down on our knees,... to give thanks and praise to almighty God because everything we have, ... our health,...our skills and talents,...our ability to work,...our family, ...our possessions,... everything we have, are gifts from God,...especially the gift of His Son whose suffering, death and resurrection have brought the promise of a home forever in heaven for everyone who is faithful to Him.

My friends, our God is a giver...He gives and gives and gives... 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 show our gratitude to God is to be like God...We can never be

more like God than when we give. ...Country legend Randy Travis sings a very moving song that ends like this: “It’s not what you take when you leave this world behind you...It’s what you leave behind you when you go.”

If we live our todays doing what matters to God,...giving to others as God has given to us, ...then when our last today comes,...what we leave behind won’t be measured by how much wealth and possessions we’ve accumulated,...but by the lives we made better...by the lives we helped to know the presence of God....by how we gave,... by how we loved. AMEN.