

# WEEKLY SERMON

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## Vanity, vanity!

*Luke 12.13-21*

The poor barn-builder in this reading. He did everything right. He (presumably) heard the Proverb to consider the ways of the ant, to store provisions and stave off scarcity – and he went and got on with it.

He must have worked terribly hard for such a yield. He's about to relax and enjoy his hard-earned food. But finally, upon the crafting of his storehouses for more than he ever anticipated, the fruits of his labour are revealed: all is left behind, for a reckoning before God.

Where did it turn from wisdom to futility? What chance do we stand when even those who follow scripture seem to get it so wrong?

It is one of a series of Luke's subversions – not dissimilar to the story of Martha, chastised by Jesus for carrying out the vital and expected work of hospitality.

Just as Martha's perspective shifts to centre her own needs at the expense of her guest, so too does our many-barned friend lose sight of all but the soul he congratulates: his own.

His storehouses. His food. His rest. His needs. His, his, his. Him, him, him. Me, me, me.

His actions may have been rooted in Scripture, but his motive was no longer the will of God.

Even the most objectively virtuous behaviour can distort beyond what God intends for us, if we don't keep him firmly at the centre of our actions.

We walk the right walk, and talk the right talk, while our souls bask in how it makes us look; what luxuries we can stretch to and the lack of charity we can justify through what we believe we've earned.

But nothing we receive from God relates to our merits. Our storehouses are not built for excess, and we cannot prioritise our luxuries over the needs of those God calls us into community with.

Our delight cannot be in accumulation, or the satisfaction of how we imagine others see us.

It can't be in a justified righteousness that breaks the bruised reed and snuffs the smouldering wick, or in the careful sculpting and display of our most sympathetic behaviours and qualities.

Instead, we are to delight in one another and in the image of Christ that dwells in every person; our self-image and self-sufficiency needn't enter it at all.

Our actions must be for God, God alone, and for the care and nurture of his creation; anything else is vanity.

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