

“But God said to him, “You fool! This very night your life is demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?” Luke 12:20

Introduction

This Scripture passage records a parable Jesus told which speaks to this subject. It has come to be known in our day as the Parable of the Rich Fool. It was the story of a farmer who faced a problem. He had a bumper crop and his barns were already full (This was before the days of soil banks and grain elevators!) So he had a conversation with himself and decided to build bigger barns to hold all he had produced. Then, in his words, “I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have ample good laid up to last you for many years: take your ease, eat, drink, be merry.’” But God appeared to him and said, “You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?” It was the announcement that he was to die that night and all his good would go to other people. He would enjoy none of them.

Heed the call to a life of preparedness

The parable reminds us of the fragility and uncertainty of human life. The farmer thought he had many years ahead of him: “Soul, you have ample good laid up to last you for many years.” But he didn’t. Life is full of dangers. Our ancestors when planning something ahead would often add the letters “D.V.” to their plans: Deo volente, or God willing. They recognized that the future is out of our hands. We today face that same uncertainty. Every day we read stories in the paper reminding us that life confronts us with many pitfalls. A plane crashes near Pittsburgh and 131 people are killed instantly, many of them young people who thought they had a long future before them. So the parable is calling us to a life of preparedness. This is a theme in many of Jesus’ parables. The master will come at a time when he is unexpected; it will be like a thief in the night; we are to keep our lamps filled with oil for the bridegroom will come by surprise. It is a warning that at all times we should be aware of our calling.

Take stock of things you have prepared

The farmer had been blessed with an abundance; his mistake was in using it selfishly. He had allowed it to turn himself in on himself. Note in the parable he talks only to himself, not to anyone else, and certainly not to God. The old Greeks said there were only two questions about any pleasure: “Do I possess it? or Am I possessed by it?” “Do I control it? or Does it control me?” The farmer made this mistake. He felt that by storing up things he could make his life secure. We see the same thing all around us today, people who in their pursuit of things – a second car, a vacation home, a larger salary, etc. – have allowed these things to turn them in on themselves. Someone has said we are living in an M&M generation; more and more for me and mine. The late Reuel Howe once made a penetrating comment. He said, “Things were meant to be used and people were meant to be loved, but we have twisted that around so that we love things and use people.”

Conclusion

All that the man had stored up was going to go to others—a reminder to use that “we can’t take it with us.” All that we have worked for and accumulated during our lifetime is going to go to others. But if we are going to make that determination we have to have a will; otherwise the courts will make that determination for us. So the writing of a will can be a time when we take stock of life and determine who and what things are most important to us. It can help us sort out our priorities. It can also be a declaration of faith. Someone has raised the question, “Is there anything in your will to show you are a Christian?” If there is some mission or ministry of the Church which has meant much to us in life, we can have the satisfaction of knowing that we are helping to continue it even after we are gone, by including its support in our will. In the Book of Revelation, there is a beatitude which promises a blessing to those who die in the Lord, assuring that their works will follow them. Our works will follow us if we provide the same support for them after our death as we have in life.