

# You are not your own best friend. Jesus is!

Sermon 19.6.2022 at Johanne Olivia Chan's baptism in Gratia Evangelical Lutheran Free Church in Aarhus.  
LGJ

**Gospel: Luke 12:13-21:** <sup>13</sup> *Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me."* <sup>14</sup> *But he said to him, "Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?"* <sup>15</sup> *And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."* <sup>16</sup> *And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man produced plentifully, <sup>17</sup> and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' <sup>18</sup> And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. <sup>19</sup> And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry."<sup>20</sup> But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' <sup>21</sup> So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."*

## 1. WHAT DOES LIFE DEPEND ON?

Jesus answers, ***for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.*** He thus says that our life does not depend on what we have in addition to what is necessary: extra food, more rooms, extra pension, more in salary, more things, extra vacation, extra clothes - that is, abundance.

It becomes so clear when we think of Johanne. Her life does not depend on what she owns. What good would it do to give her a lot of money, a lot of toys or a castle to live in? Her life depends on what is needed: Mom and Dad and sister and others who take care of her, healthy food and a clean diaper and a fun teddy bear. It is the elementary and basic: food, clothing and security and some who love her.

**Jesus tells it because there are two brothers** who are losing each other - losing brotherly love - losing the family bond. <sup>13</sup> *Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me."* Their father had died. And now they were to inherit. Maybe money. Maybe a farm. There was to be sharing, but one brother would not share. They had lost their father. Didn't they see that the greatest gift their father has given them was that they were brothers and had each other? Would they now quarrel and break their brotherly fellowship with each other because of the inheritance? Was it more important than having each other?

**What could the brother who was being cheated achieve** if he claimed his right and took the case to a judge? Well, he could obtain the portion of the inheritance to which he was entitled. But at the same time, he might lose his brother. What could he achieve if he said to his brother: "If it is best for you that the farm that our father left behind is not sold and divided in two, but that you get it, then you get it. And I can visit you and we can be happy together."? Then he would miss his part of the inheritance but he would have fellowship with his brother. And what was most important? What is most important to us? The life we have with each other or that we have an abundance of things? We heard the Preacher say it like this: *There is a grievous evil which I have seen under the sun: riches being hoarded by their owner to his hurt. When those riches were lost through a bad investment and he had fathered a son, then there was nothing to support him. As he had come naked from his mother's womb, so will he return as he came.* (Eccl 5:13ff)

## 2. WHAT MAKES US CHOOSE AS WRONG AS THE BROTHER WAS GOING TO DO?

**Jesus mentions "Greed".** And he said to them: ***"Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."*** It might not look like greed (covetousness). The man had a legal right to get half of the inheritance. But was it perhaps a form of greed anyway if he claimed it?

If you stick to your salary and rejects to share part of what you really do not need for living, it may be one of those forms of "greed" that you do not discover, because you have the right to keep what you have earned. You have a legal right to keep it. You have the right to use what you earn on yourself once you have paid taxes. No authority punishes you for that reason. Still, maybe you should share with other people?

For us to understand, Jesus tells a story where something in the story resembles us or God. Jesus is helping us to realize what we have a hard time seeing. The story is about a farmer who gets a very good harvest. Extraordinarily good. So good that he has no room for his grain. This is equivalent to you winning a car in the lottery and not having room for it in your garage. Or that you get a higher salary and do not need the money. You simply have extra. What shall you then do? Are you then expanding your consumption?

In the story, the man thinks well of himself. And then he gets an idea: He wants to build his barns bigger and store it all: ***"I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. <sup>19</sup> And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry."*** Notice that he is talking to himself. about the problem of the good harvest. Does he have no friends to ask for advice? Does he not talk to God if God has an idea? No. He speaks to himself: ***"My soul [Danish My friend], you have enough for many years!"*** Maybe he's his own only friend. He does not think of his wife and children, nor of his brothers and sisters or poor neighbors. He is his own best and only friend.

***But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' <sup>21</sup> So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."*** And in the three words "rich toward God" we sense that there is hope and answer for the brother and for us!

### 3. RICH TOWARD GOD AND THE BEST FRIEND

Jesus says that one can be ***"rich toward God!"*** To be rich with God is to be with God with his riches and ask him what he wants with what he has given me. After all, all we have is a gift from him. Does he want us to spend it on ourselves? No, he wants us to spend it on our family and friends and on the poor, and on his church so that those of us who can hear the gospel and pass it on to others. To be rich with God is to be with him with what God has given us. It changes our relationship to everything we thought we owned. We discover that it is God's gift that He has entrusted to us, and that we are housekeepers who need it in love.

And then this is only a fraction of being rich with God. To be rich with God is first and foremost to have Jesus as his friend. Jesus once said, "No one has greater love than he who lays down his life for his friends. You are my friends!" And then he gave them his life. The apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 8: 9: ***And ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he became poor for your sake, though he was rich, that ye through his poverty might become rich.*** We became rich when the Son of God became a poor man. He was born, was a child, grew up, served others in love. And eventually he was tortured, suffered and died on the cross. He lost everything. Also his life. He did this so that we might have life, namely, by taking our guilt upon ourselves. He bore our sins and took the punishment we deserved because we have failed one another, acted against God's commandment that we should love Him and love our neighbor as ourselves. The greatest riches are the forgiveness and salvation of God.

That wealth was given to us in baptism. And today it was also given to Johanne Olivia Chan. The cross was drawn for her face and chest. She belongs to Jesus! Jesus is her friend. Her best friend. And God the Father has become her father. And he takes care of Johanne's mom Cherry, and her dad Alan, and her sister Karis, so they can take care of her. This wealth is more important than all money and all things.

That wealth God gives us. He gives us faith by the word of the Gospel. In the bath of baptism, he gives us a new birth and makes us his children. And in the sacrament, he gives us the body and blood of Jesus, so that we can know for certain that Jesus is with us. And Jesus says: My friends! I'm with you every day. Hold fast to my word, eat, drink, and be merry. And serve one another and preach the gospel to the whole world.

The gospel has placed us in God's presence with everything we own and to rejoice that Jesus is our best friend and that we have a Christian congregation and family. Amen.