

# Bigger Barns? Longer Tables!

8/3/25

Remind us, beloved Lord, that you are with us here, in this place, at this moment. Amen.

Good morning. As Nina just mentioned, I'm Craig Reynolds, and I am your preacher today. And as your preacher, I am feeling **most** grateful. I'm grateful to Nina for the invitation and support. Grateful to the Diocese and Canon Steven Wilco for offering and leading a lay preaching class. Grateful to you all for your patience and generosity. And grateful that today's Gospel seems tailor-made for a first-time preacher!

You'll recall, it's brief. It's got a meaty parable. And the parable concludes by delivering what might be the most obvious preacher's "punchline" in all four Gospels!

***"So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God."***

If this isn't a sermon delivered on a silver platter, I don't know what is. All I have to do is say a few words about materialism, greed, and the folly of trying to control our lives, and boom! Sermon done.

Or so I thought.

I actually started writing this sermon in June. Five drafts later (OK, it was a lot more than 5), something still felt off. None of those draft quite touched the thing I was feeling in my heart when I read Luke's words.

And then it hit me.

Yes, the brothers who come to Jesus are missing the point, focused on their bickering instead of the presence of God - the Son of Man - standing before them!

Yes, the rich man in the parable is selfish, hoarding his abundance and dreaming only of bigger barns. But there's something else there too.

The rich landowner? He's alone. And I think he's scared. And I'm not even sure he knows it.

Recall his three-sentence conversation with himself in the meat of the parable. He sounds triumphant and self-satisfied. Sure of his plans.

But take a closer look at his words: he uses "I" or "my" eleven times. Eleven times in three sentences! Not once does he say "we" or "ours." Because there's no one else in the picture.

He's isolated. And underneath the bravado, lonely. Maybe even hollowed out by fear. Fear that he won't have enough. Fear that he won't **be** enough.

And that's what we humans do when we're afraid or alone. We build walls. We hoard. We plan. We calculate. We exclude.

We build bigger barns.

So yes, I understand the frustration Jesus must have felt when the brothers asked him to settle their personal squabble.

And the parable's rich man... when he responds to unexpected abundance by tightening his grip, I get the urge to yell at the screen like I might during a frustrating Netflix movie:

"No! Wait! You can do better than this! Try again!"

And that's when I realized what had been missing in my previous drafts:

***compassion.***

You see, I've been *that* guy. I've been the one missing the point **COMPLETELY** — distracted by fear, pulled by anxiety, stuck in scarcity.

So, I don't want to shame the rich man or the brothers. I want to **see** them, and maybe see myself in them. And then I want to hear the Gospel's invitation—not just to be scolded, but to be shown another way.

As we've already heard, Jesus ends the parable with a twist: a call to be "rich toward God." Mysterious words... They're simple, but not completely clear.

What exactly does it mean to be "rich toward God"?

Maybe Jesus wants us to wrestle with that. To live the question. To ask ourselves, in times of abundance **and** in times of difficulty, "How can we be rich toward God?"

Nelson Mandela, a man who spent 27 years in prison standing for the principles of justice, once said,

***"May your choices reflect your hopes, not your fears."***

So, if I were writing the screenplay for this Gospel story, maybe the rich man chooses differently. Maybe instead of bigger barns, he builds...

***a longer table.***

He opens his doors. He invites his workers—even those who are enslaved. He brings in neighbors, strangers, kids, elders. They bring their stories. He brings the wine.

Or maybe, instead of building anything new, he drags out old tables from the barn. Big ones, small ones. Some wobble. Some are cracked and worn. None of them match. The guests help push the tables together.

It starts to look like a feast. The kind of table where everyone brings something. Where there's always room for one more.

And maybe—just maybe—that's one glimpse of what being “rich toward God” looks like.

Not bigger barns. But longer tables.

Maybe it's not about having the perfect plan but showing up anyway. With mismatched furniture. With broken parts patched together. With more hunger for connection than fear of loss.

Maybe that's how we live with fear. And loneliness. ***Together.***

***So, pull up a chair. And make space for someone next to you. There's room for everyone.***

Amen.