

The Soul Requirement

Proper 13/VBS

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Luke 12:13-21

Grace, peace, and mercy be to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

How quickly things can change! At the beginning of the week, we began our Vacation Bible School focused on Noah and how God saved him and his family in the ark. Some of the kids in front had probably heard the account before, but for some, it may have been their first time. Over the course of the five days from Monday to Friday, it's hard to think that these kids learned nothing. They at least learned one new thing, if not several. And you've heard how well they've learned their songs of praise.

Yet life is not about the collection of things—not even the abundance of knowledge. The sole requirement for life is faith in Jesus Christ and Him crucified and risen for you. That is the truth revealed in the account of Noah that we studied this week. While Noah's neighbors all worried about collecting material possessions, "eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark...they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away (Matthew 24:38b-39)." All but Noah and his family, because they believed the Word of God.

The same is true today. Don't fool yourself into thinking that that was then and this is now. Don't let society tell you that the account never happened. After all, don't the thoughts of humanity blow back and forth about many topics? Is the egg healthy or not? Is smoking healthy or not? Is Pluto a planet or not? Where else but God's Word can you have a sure word given?

But again, some might say, "That was then and this is now." Well, Jesus Himself thought it was worth mentioning Noah. In Matthew chapter 24 we hear Jesus speak the words from a moment ago, that they were "eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage...unaware until the flood came and swept them all away." Jesus continues that this is how it will be until the "coming of the Son of Man."

As we learned this week, God promised that He would not flood the entire world again, and He sealed that promise with the first rainbow. Yet in 2 Peter, we learn that He will destroy the world, only when Jesus returns it will be by fire. Are you ready? Turn with me to the Gospel text and we'll see what Jesus says about that sole requirement for eternal life.

Verse 1

"Someone in the crowd said to (Jesus), 'Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.'"

Does that sound familiar to any of you? Fighting over possessions? That's my book! That's my doll! That's my DVD! That's my cell phone! Tell him to share! She's not sharing! Give it back! Give it to me! If you are so concerned about your things, hear Jesus' words: "'Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.'"

Turn to your bulletin cover. Would you agree that that looks like a nice barn? It even looks like it has a new coat of paint. Yet what will that barn be worth to the owner when the he or she dies? It is a nice tool for use while alive, but it will mean nothing toward the owner's soul. The same is true for any possession, no matter what it is. They are all useful tools, and while some may be more technologically advanced or functional for this job or that, none of them will make a difference concerning your eternal life.

Do you have a dispute with your brother or sister, your mother or father? Don't let it continue too long. You never know when Jesus will return. It may not be for another two thousand years, or it could be in two hours. Is your concern with your neighbor worth more than your soul? The Scriptures say "If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love

God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother (1 John 4:20-21)."

If your desire is for your possessions or those of your neighbor, repent, and turn to Jesus, the Son of God who loves you so much that He died for you.

But pastor, is it okay to have possessions? Yes, God desires to give us what we need and sometimes even more; the problem is the sin of focusing either solely or too much on those possessions. Just look at the parable that Jesus told the crowd in the following verses that we heard just a few minutes ago.

Verse 2

As you look at the parable, you might notice that the man was rich and that his land once again produced plentifully. You might see that he has good logic in coming up with a plan for how to resolve his dilemma. And you might think that his saying that he can "relax, eat, drink, be merry" is his problem, yet even Ecclesiastes states that "There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil" which Solomon—the writer of Ecclesiastes—also wrote is "from the hand of God."

God desires that we should enjoy His creation and the things He gives us. It is also good that we share with one another. That doesn't mean we have to all the time, but that's what we find Jesus' apostles doing in the Spirit in the book of Acts. In Acts 5:32, the apostles are living in the Spirit of God and it says "they had everything in common."

So it is good and proper to share with one another, but was hording and not sharing the sin of the rich man? Maybe that was part of it; but look again at what Jesus said was his problem. The problem is when one "lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."

God told the rich man just before that: "“Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?”” Is your soul prepared? Jesus may return at any time now that He has ascended back to heaven. We don't know the time or the day. Are you ready? He may very well return while you and I are alive. Or, if Christ does not return within your life time, He will come calling you when you die. Do you want to hear Him speak the words from our text to you: "“Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?”” As Jesus says, "So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."

Again, God wants to give us what we need. That's why Jesus continued, saying, "Therefore...do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on...For the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows you need them."

Verse 3

God already knows everything we need without our even asking; and He desires to give us what we need. But while others strive so hard to get these things and ignore God and His Word, Jesus told His hearers in the crowd, and you through our text this morning, "Instead, seek his (that is, God's) kingdom, and these things will be added to you."

There again is the sole requirement for your soul: being rich toward God in love for Him. The problem is that none of us is born able to love God of ourselves. We are all born blind, dead, enemies of God. But God, in His great mercy, sent Jesus, not only to preach and teach the words we just heard, but also to go to the cross of Calvary. Jesus went to the cross to pay for all of our sin—the things we have done wrong—even loving possessions more than God—the things we have not done that we should have—even refusing to share our possessions with others—and for the sin of our very natures.

All of your sin was paid for on the cross of Calvary. Yet just hearing about this is not enough. You must believe it, just like we heard Noah did this week. This is why God has sent His Spirit into the world. The Holy Spirit works through God's Word and through His Sacraments in creating and sustaining faith in you in Jesus and all that He has done for you. On Friday, we saw four baptisms—four miracles where God washed His children clean from their sin and gave them His Holy Spirit. If you have been baptized, God has done the same for you there and then. But what is more, God's Spirit also works through His Word, the very Word you heard a few minutes ago and that you are hearing in this sermon.

Again, the sole requirement for your soul is faith in Jesus Christ—faith just like Noah's. And God is working through His Word, even as I speak, so that you might be brought to saving faith in His Son—the very Son who died for your sin, was raised back to life, and will return again, even Jesus Christ. In Jesus' Name. Amen.