

Look up

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost (OS 18C)

Published in the Ministry District of Yorke Peninsula

Sunday, July 31, 2022

It seems clear from the Gospel reading that the world hasn't changed much since Jesus day. Inheritance and possessions appear to be creating as much family tension then as in now.

We have been through this with my Father-in-Law's estate as well as downsizing of my parents assets when they sold up their house. There was a little tension, but generally we happily were in reasonable agreement. I can imagine in less structured and connected families how much heartache and angst that this process would cause. Nowhere more than in the farming families in this district, where the asset of the family farm is not only significant in value, but often involves the livelihood of one or more descendant.

So what is equity? What is justice? The voice in the crowd sought Jesus to give a ruling on the material possessions for he thought he had right on his side and recognising in Jesus a righteous man sought a righteous judgement. What better source.

Perhaps this is true, but the lawyers of this world make very good money from both sides who are convinced that they are right. Indeed, all wars are fought by people who have God or Right on their side.

Perhaps it is out of our league but think of the battle for the assets of Lang Hancock. But this is the end product of an asset driven society and as much a part of the society of Jesus' day as it is now.

But Jesus does not get involved, for assets, and possessions are a distraction from the real purpose of being. Jesus says look up and get the heavenly things right. Paul says this too - Set your minds on the things above and even the first reading points us to the vanity of the accumulation of possessions to be enjoyed by those who will follow.

Think of the man in Jesus story so engrossed in the getting of things in order on earth, so convinced that the purpose of life was to set up oneself for ease in old age that he neglected his soul.

Is there a more timely message for us and our world? And I don't think that it only applies to them out there, but to us in here as well? For we all can become out of whack in our priorities.

You know that I say that I do not insist on Church Attendance as a measure of commitment. But I have said this often to young people that I have been nurturing - God is not concerned as to you not being in church as much as to the reasons why you are not there. These reasons will point to your priorities. In my work with young people - a good night out on Saturday night meant Sunday was a write off.

The story does not condemn prudent management or concern for ones affairs in our old age but we must take care of the spiritual as well. For what does it profit a man (or woman) if they gain the whole world and lose their soul?

Jesus is not speaking against possessions but warns of the subtle seduction of these things

in that they take the focus away from the heavenly dimension. The story is told to illustrate Jesus statement - "Take care, be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's live does not consist of an abundance of possessions." And it equally applies to the church as well. Working as a Priest with Treasurer, I hold to the principle that it was my job to tell them what we would spend the money on and theirs to tell me that we didn't have it. It is not prudent that we ignore the balance sheet, but it is also not prudent that we are governed by it. This is why many clergy do not like the Robert's Rules being applied to the church Council meetings as it tends to focus on the vision of the financial statement.

We begin asking God to give us the picture as to where we are to go. Part of this process is that each of us as individuals also must set our heavenly goals as well as our earthly ones. I am not saying - tear up the super policy but make the God things your focus. Put your best time and energy into God's work and let him help you take care of the rest.

And perhaps this is something to note after a good season - what are you going to do with God's blessing and abundance - a new tractor? A new barn? - In all things let us be mindful of the giver of these good things and be prepared to give back to God some of this abundance lest we hear the voice of God saying "you fool..."

It is only when we see our abundance, as God giving us more opportunity to give to others and to share in his work that our perspective becomes right.

So the question is - what is your heart set upon? May God help you and I focus on the things above.

AMEN