

“Jesus about the Westerners” Luke 12:13-21

Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” But he said to him, “Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?” 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.” And he told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich man produced plentifully, and he thought to himself, “What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?” 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. And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.”” But God said to him, “Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?” So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”

Today in our Gospel reading we heard Jesus speaking about Western people. That's right, about people in Western countries. And when He spoke about them, He didn't speak about them highly.

Let's take a closer look at our Gospel text to see what exactly our God is teaching to us. This event, which we just read about, addresses two of the great problems we have in the prosperous West, that is, – ignorance and foolishness.

Ignorance – for so many don't know who Jesus is. Foolishness – for so many, exactly as the rich man in this parable, believe that all they need for this life is financial security. If you have it, you have all you need.

Let's begin with ignorance. Someone in the crowd said to Jesus: “Teacher...” Teacher? But who was Jesus? This person thought that Jesus was simply a teacher. Famous, popular, unusual, but still a teacher.

How would majority of Australians describe who Jesus was? How would many of those who believe they are Christians describe who Jesus was? Very often it would go like this.

“He was a great teacher. He was an excellent example for us. There is a lot we can learn from Him.” And that's about it. He was one of the great teachers of humanity, like Buddha, Confucius, Mohammed and others. A great teacher.

This is what is called ignorance. Sure, Jesus was among others things also a great teacher, but He was so, so much more than that. Just listen to these words. “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible [...] all things were

created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. (Col 1:15-17) For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily. (Col 2:9)

Did you hear that? Just a teacher?! God! God the Creator, through whom and for whom everything was created, and in whom everything still holds together. This is who Jesus Christ is. True God. The Lord of the Universe.

But why then He appeared in so strange a way as a man? Because of you. For you. For your sake. He is the Creator. He loves His creation. And He loves His little rebellious human creatures, us.

He loves us as only God can love, and His heart is bleeding seeing us enslaved by sin and death and devil. Ignorant and foolish. Arrogant and helpless at the same time. It is painful for Him to watch our misery.

Because He is God the Creator, and because He loves His creation, He is going to act, in a way that only God the Creator can act. He will restore the goodness of His creation. He will cleanse it from all evil, from sin and even from death.

He will destroy everything that corrupts His good creation. And it means that He will have to destroy us. For it is us, who carry this disease, sin, which is the root problem of all that is wrong in this world.

And this is where our loving God has this dilemma. By destroying all evil, He would have to destroy also us, His beloved creatures, whom He created to be together with Him; so that we can converse with Him, and rejoice in never ending blessedness.

This is why God acted in Jesus Christ. He came to save His fallen creatures. To save us, to save you from this terrifying day, when He will come to judge the whole creation and to restore it in its goodness.

This is why He chose to become one of us, and to take full responsibility of all the wrongs that His human creatures have done, to take all our sins and guilt upon Himself, and to carry it on the cross.

As you know, the wages of sin is death. This is why the innocent Son of God died. To receive the death that our sins deserve. Now it is done. Finished. He has received your death. And because He was innocent, death had no power over Him.

Jesus Christ rose from the dead, victorious, in new perfect body. Now He offers to you, and to every human being His forgiveness, life and freedom. Jesus offers you this wonderful exchange; this is how it works.

He took your sins, He died your death and now He gives you His forgiveness and His life, for He has life in Himself, which means that all your guilt before God is

taken away, and now you receive and possess what belongs to Jesus, the Father's love, and eternal life.

If you accept Jesus offer, there is no more God's judgement for you. No more fear of failing, falling short, not being good enough. Then on the Last Day you will stand with Jesus, forgiven, in new resurrected body, ready for the greatest adventure, eternal life in the presence of God.

Jesus brings you freedom. We all live with this sense of accountability, our conscience. We know that we will have to give an account for what we have done with the lives that God had given to us. This is what drives people.

This is what makes them to strive to be good. Even if they do it according their own ideas. This is what drives people to justify their existence. To show that they are somebody. Jesus gives freedom and rest.

If you accept Jesus offer, the Holy Spirit assures you that you don't have to prove that you are good, that you don't need to justify your existence. No more bad conscience, instead wonderful and comforting freedom and peace.

Freedom to live fully human life. Freedom to live the life that we are created for. Receiving everything from our loving God, and living fulfilled and joyful lives serving all people that God has placed around us.

When people think that Jesus is only teacher, then they misunderstand what the Church is. It is not about learning how to be moral people. It is about rejoicing in this wonderful exchange and telling others about it.

It is about enlightening people about who Jesus is, what we are, what our problem is, – sin, what is going to happen on the Last Day, and what Jesus offers to everyone who is not too proud and arrogant to reject His gift. In Jesus God takes your sin and death, and gives you His holiness and life, freedom and peace.

Out of ignorance people miss out on these wonderful treasures. Loving God greaves for everyone who leaves this life without accepting Jesus' gifts, and this is why He has called and sent us, each of you.

So that we would bring to everyone this life-changing message about Jesus, true God and true man. Just think, what a joy and honour it is, to be God's messengers.

Now, let's talk about foolishness. This is the main topic in today's Gospel reading, the one that Jesus addresses in details. This is really about Western people. When the man from the crowd asked Jesus to rebuke his brother, Jesus said: "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

Then He told the parable about this man, he could as well be an Australian. He was very rich, and prosperous. He had land and properties, and business was going really well. He was proud about all that *he* had done, about all that *he* had achieved, about *his* possessions.

Then he got the next great deal turning out, and he had this challenge, what to do with all this extra money? It isn't easy. Then he discussed this matter with the smartest person around, that is, with himself and made up a great plan.

He will build bigger properties, and then he will invest some of money, and then his future will be secure. Then he will be able to relax and enjoy his life. Probably he will travel. He will entertain himself with different hobbies.

Cars, and horses, and good wine, and whatever his heart may desire. Do you know of anyone in Australia how fits this description? As Jesus picture them, – rich, lonely and fools.

It's clear why rich, but why lonely? The rich man in this parable discussed everything with himself. In the Middle Eastern culture it was and still is a part of their culture, that everything is discussed with family, relatives, friends, community. Especially big decisions.

This guy had only himself to consult with. It is quite obvious why. If you trust in friends, you will cling to your friendships, and other things will be less important. If you trust in God, you will hold fast to Jesus, and other things will be less important.

But if you trust in your possession, then everything else will be less important, and you will have to safeguard your precious from anyone who may threaten it. This is how people end up lonely. This is why they need more and more entertainment, adventures, fun, parties, – just to fill the void inside. Loneliness is the prize for your greed.

Our God is God of community. He has created us to be with Him, and the day comes, when we will be with Him. For now He comes to be with us here, in the Divine Service.

He comes to you, for He loves to care for you, He loves to bless you, and He loves to be with you, to know you and to allow you to know Him. He also gives you many, many new brothers and sisters. To love, and to be loved by them.

This is who you are, children of God, and brothers and sisters in Christ. Sure, in this life we are far from perfect, but we all will be made perfect, and we will be together in the great banquet that Jesus is preparing.

And even know, God unites us with His Holy Spirit, thus He makes us one with Him and with one another, so that we could rejoice together, praising our Saviour Jesus for what He has done for us, and for what He has prepared for us. To be a Christian is to know that you are never lonely, it is about rejoicing in the community of all God's saints.

Then Jesus called this man a fool. How else could we call someone who believes that one's life consists in the abundance of his possessions? In this parable God said to the rich man:

“Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?” “So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”

It is so pitiful. People who lay up treasures for themselves, but are not rich towards God. Don't get it wrong. Land, possessions, businesses, money, prosperity, wealth, these are good things. They are God's blessings, God's gifts.

Hard and diligent work, honest businesses, these are not only good things, but we actually are created for them, we are created to continue the work of our Creator and thus to serve others. There is nothing wrong with any of these.

The problem, the foolishness begins, when someone thinks that this is it, that's all I need. To work hard and to achieve financial security. In this parable God says to the rich man: “Your life will be required from you.”

What He is saying is that even our lives are simply given to us, and one day they will be required. They are given so that we could spend them living according to the will of our Heavenly Father. They don't belong to us. We belong to God.

Everything we have and everything we are, we have received from our Creator. As His generous gifts. Everything. Life, talents, people, opportunities, and so on. And that's good, that's comforting, for we know the Giver.

They are given to us so that we could receive them from our generous Father with gratitude and trust that He provides for our daily bread. When people focus only on the gifts, and put their trust in the gifts, but reject and ignore the Giver, how else you can call it, but foolishness?

And again, how freeing and uplifting it is to know that you can not only enjoy God's gifts, but also the Giver Himself wants you to know Him, and we know Him as our Father. How good is that!

Later today we have this forum where we will share ideas about the future of the Church in Barossa. We need to remember what we learned today: who Jesus is, and why we are here as His Church.

We need to constantly remind ourselves how much others need to hear about this gracious God, how much they need to experience God's freeing presence among His people, and how much they need God's wisdom, so that they could live their lives trusting in God, instead of relying on created things.

We are not here to worry about the preservation of our congregation, or of the LCA. We are here for something much, much greater, we are here as God's messengers to tell people about Jesus Christ, true God and true man, and about what He has done.

To help them to turn their focus from gifts, to the Giver of every good gifts. That's a joyful mission we have. May the Holy Spirit be with us!

Amen.