

# Sunday Homily

## SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

31 JULY 2022

YEAR C

“One’s life does not consist in  
the abundance of possessions.”

Luke 12:15

### Illustration

In Bach’s Cantata 82, the bass soloist repeats the haunting refrain that gives the song its title: “Ich habe genug.” I have enough. Composed for the feast of the Purification of the Virgin Mary in 1727, the cantata expands on Simeon’s words as he holds the infant Jesus, the words Christians still say as the Nunc Dimittis at evening prayer: “Now, Lord, you let your servant go in peace: your word has been fulfilled.”

In the cantata, we hear: “I have enough, for I have taken the Saviour into my arms. I have enough; I have seen him, my faith has held Jesus to my heart. I have enough!”

And at that point, as in Simeon’s original praise, the singer is happy to die. Music critics call this a gloomy song, with its focus on death: a description also applied by some commentators to today’s reading from Luke’s Gospel. Are they perhaps missing the point?

### Gospel Teaching

The parable Jesus tells of the rich fool and his barns is not about death, but about life: about the way to live, not about the need to die. Jesus tells it in answer to an interruption from someone in the crowd while he was talking to his disciples about his identity and their mission to tell others about him. Into this discourse comes the jarring demand for Jesus to arbitrate in a property dispute.

Jesus replies first with a question: “Who set me to be judge over you?” Not a rhetorical question, for there’s irony here: it was God who appointed Jesus, as we say in the creed, to judge the living and the dead, when he comes again in glory. For the moment, though, Jesus was not there to judge, least of all to settle family squabbles over land or goods.

Cautioning his listeners to shun greed of any kind, Jesus reminds them that life is more than possessions: life is a loving relationship with God. That is what we were made for. When our earthly life is over, our possessions are left behind; but if we have cultivated our relationship with God, then life goes on in God’s eternal kingdom. Faith in God, in God’s love for us as revealed in Jesus, is all we need. It is enough.

Jesus isn't saying that we should have no material possessions at all, shouldn't enjoy the good things God has given us – or that we should focus entirely on the one apparent certainty in our lives: their end! For there is another certainty: the love of God, a love that teaches us the value of giving, rather than receiving.

The rich fool had enough, and to spare, of material possessions. Specifically, he had food – so much that he couldn't store it all. Did others around him have enough food? Did he bother to find out? Did he call to mind God's frequent insistence through the prophets that we should feed the hungry, clothe the naked, give to the poor?

## Application

We do not know the hour of our own death, or of Christ's coming again in glory, so all our carefully laid plans for increasing our material wealth in this world may come to nothing. If the investment we make is in our spiritual wealth, however, we can be sure of a rich dividend. If we seek the Spirit's treasures of love, joy and peace, they will be multiplied in the next life.

Let us look this week at the needs of others, and be prepared to give of our own abundance to those who do not have enough: to give our time, our talents, our money to help those in need; to share our faith with those who have yet to recognise God's love. This is not a way of earning our salvation, but simply helps us appreciate it. The more we absorb the commandments to love God and our neighbour, and the more we allow our lives to be guided by those precepts, the less preoccupied we will become with our own possessions and the less we need fear death.

Enough, they say, is as good as a feast. And the feast we have come together to share today is a reminder of God's all-sufficient love and a taster of that feast we will share in heaven. Feed on him in your hearts, by faith, with thanksgiving. For if we have faith, we have enough.