

Wednesday, July 29, 2020

## **Hearses don't pull U-Hauls**

**- Pastor Hank French**

*And he said to them, "Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions" (Luke 12:15).*

It seems to me that the lifestyles of an awful lot of people signify that they do not agree with Jesus. Rather than being on guard against all kinds of greed, for a lot of people greed is a way of life. More than enough is never enough, too much is never too much and the value of one's life is measured by what one has and how much one has. Such folks flatly contradict Jesus' assertion that a person's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions; sadly, for such folks, life consists exactly in the abundance of possessions.

But if what Jesus says in this text is true—and I certainly think it is—then, if one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions, what does one's life consist of? Good question, and the answer is on every page of the four gospels; the answer can be found in everything Jesus said and did. Relationships. A person's life consists in the abundance and quality of one's relationships. Life is good, meaningful, a blessing to yourself and others when it is lived in healthy, loving, kind, compassionate other-centered relationships.

After telling the crowd to be on guard against all kinds of greed, Jesus told them a parable. Here it is: "The land of a rich man produced abundantly. And he thought to himself, 'What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?' Then he said, 'I will do this: I will pull 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, 'You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God" (Luke 12:16-21).

Rich landowners in the 1<sup>st</sup> century were surrounded on all sides by the poor, by landless peasants who worked the land of the rich landowners and produced the crops that made them rich. While the rich landowners ate and drank and made merry, the poor did back breaking work and made only a bare subsistence living.

If instead of storing up treasures for themselves the wealthy wanted to be "rich toward God," all they had to do was keep enough for themselves and their family and then share the rest with those who had next to nothing.

In a Bible study on Jesus' parable of the rich landowner that I taught some time ago, a woman wisely commented that she had never seen a hearse pulling a U-Haul behind it. After we stopped laughing, she went on to note, "But you can tell who is 'rich toward God' by the number of folks who show up for the funeral."

Prayer: Gracious God, protect me from every kind of greed and turn my focus from wealth and possessions to people. Amen.