

Stretching Toward Sunday

Thoughts, readings and reflections
based on this week's lectionary readings

August 4, 2019
Proper 13C / Ordinary 18C / Pentecost +8

The readings this week:

- Hosea 11:1-11
- Psalm 107:1-9, 43
- Colossians 3:1-11
- Luke 12:13-21

[Click here to read this week's Scriptures](#)

Storing Up

Jesus told them a parable: "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."

I wish I had not read this after two straight weekends of being so proud of what our garden has produced, making jam and pickles, blackberry coffee cakes, zucchini bread and roasted tomatoes. I stacked the jars in the pantry behind the jam and pickles we still have left from last year, laid the tomatoes and baked goods in the deep freeze. And then I thought: It surely would be nice to have another freezer...

You know the story about the man who was excited about the harvest (a harvest, I would point out, that had more to do with sun and rain than with his skills as a farmer). He was so happy with his own success, he didn't think of anyone or anything else, other than how to make it even bigger and better the following year. But then what would he do with all that stuff? Why, he'd have to build more and bigger barns, of course. Not that he needed them. Maybe he just wanted to walk around in those big barns and think about what a great farmer he was, about how all this grain was his. About how he had everything he needed.

But before he could build, he died. And there he was, with a whole lot of grain.

Dead, though.

Whoopee.

Last weekend, my husband and I attended an outdoor production of *Rent*. On a lovely summer evening (after a day of storing up more harvested stuff), surrounded by happy people eating picnics as the sun set and the moon rose, we listened to the story of people in 1980s New York

City during the scourge of the AIDS epidemic. Its heavy themes of disease, decline, fear and death also support another theme: that of living in the moment. You probably know the most famous song to come out this musical, "Seasons of Love." Here are some of the lyrics.

*Five hundred twenty-five thousand six hundred minutes,
Five hundred twenty-five thousand moments so dear.
Five hundred twenty-five thousand six hundred minutes.
How do you measure, measure a year?*

*In daylights, in sunsets, in midnights,
In cups of coffee.
In inches, in miles, in laughter, in strife.*

*In five hundred twenty-five thousand six hundred minutes.
How do you measure
A year in the life?*

How about love? Measure in love.

*Oh you got to got to remember the love!
You know that love is a gift from up above
Share love, give love spread love
Measure your life in love.*

The rich man with the barns and the grain lost out. He was worried about storing up the wrong stuff and the parable calls him a fool. He died suddenly and didn't have time to reflect on what was important. Our lives are measured not by what we have in our barns, pantries, houses, driveways. Our lives are measured by the people we have touched and who have touched us.

We should be storing up love.

~ Melissa Bane Sevier, [Contemplative Viewfinder](#)



Reflecting on the Word



___ 1st Reading: [Hosea 11:1-11](#)

How does God picture himself in these verses? How comfortable or uncomfortable are you with maternal metaphors for God, with the “maternal face of God” as one commentator put it? How is the love of the LORD our God like a mother’s love according to Hosea 11:1-11? What’s lost by failing to acknowledge the maternal face of God? What’s gained by acknowledging it? In Hosea 11:9, God says, “For I am God, and not man—the Holy One among you.” What’s the point of this contrast? Though God was “not man” when Hosea was written, he became a man about 700 years after Hosea time. Describe how his decision to become a man made it possible for him to fulfill the promise of vss. 9-10. [Steve Constable](#)

___ Psalm Reading: [Psalm 107:1-9, 43](#)

Why do you think it is important to God that confession and repentance, as well as declaring His attributes, are important to the life of the congregation? Why do you think embracing humility in the power of the Holy Spirit is so important to God and our life of faith in Christ? How do these two verses share the same idea as Matthew 6:33? What are some of the “Take Aways” and why they are important to each person individually as well as a congregation as a whole? [Hope Church](#)



What does this mean, “rich toward God”?

When I pay attention to the present moment, I feel God lavishing riches upon me. Paying attention, I suppose, is letting myself be rich toward God.

In this moment: the scent of earth still clinging to me after weeding the lavender.
The still, cool air on my skin.
Ginger tea warming my throat.
The robin's clear dawn melody.
First shafts of sunshine pouring through the trees on the east side of house...

Being rich toward God seems to me to be more about consciousness than bustling around the church managing God's business. Noticing the scent of lavender and earth and early morning and still being grateful for it by the end of the day. Noticing the other: taking risks in love for Love disguised as the unlovable.

~ an excerpt from *Suzanne's Meditation*, Suzanne Guthrie,
[At the Edge of Enclosure](#)

___ 3rd Reading: [Colossians 3:1-11](#)

When you're finished with your old clothes, what do you do with them? Where did Paul tell the believers to focus their concern? Why should believers look forward to Christ's return? What had the Colossians taken off? What had the Colossians put on? If you consistently set your sights on Christ and heaven, how would your life be different? What old, "earthly" clothing do you need to get rid of? How does wearing "Christ's clothing" affect the way you live your daily life? What spiritual process(es) can you employ this week to help you “put off” the old self and “put on” the new? [Coffee House Five](#)

___ 4th Reading: [Luke 12:13-21](#)

How do you respond to the term "practical atheism" to describe how most Christians live in relation to their money? If you received a windfall of money, how would it affect your sense of security? How does this parable speak to the way financial wellness (not wealth) affects our relationship with God? Why are we so often uncomfortable when talking about money in our churches? How does this story connect with the prayer that Jesus has just taught his disciples to pray? [Weekly Seeds](#)



Praying Toward Sunday

Defying Expectation

We are sinners...
 we are not only sinners
We are weak...
 we are not only weak
We fail...
 we are not always failures
We have destroyed...
 also we have loved

You, God, do not limit us
to the stories by which the world knows us
You see much more in us
than the labels we give ourselves
Give us courage to defy all expectations –
especially our own –
and in your love
become all of who we are.

~ Cheryl Lawrie, [\[hold this space\]](#)