Love that Endures – an Invitation to be Generous in Community, Proper 13C

Proper 13C || August 3, 2025 || 9:30am St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Hanover, MA || Hosea 11:1-11; Psalm 107:1-9, 43; Colossians 3:1-11; Luke 12:13-21 || The Reverend Amy Whitcomb Slemmer, Esq.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our very patient mother and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Welcome to a beautiful and unseasonably cool August – turning a corner on our summer – with time left to make plans and capture some of the slower pace we all hope for – for rest and restoration – yet with more of this season in the rear-view-mirror than we have ahead.

We are in week five of our summer series examining the myriad facets of God's love for us and for the invitations offered in love. This morning we are focused on Love that Endures - and what that might look like for our lives.

Many of us are still glowing with the love we offered and received as presence and generous hospitality, as we crossed boundaries and cultural and geographic divides, welcoming our neighbors from Rosie's Place in Boston to Hanover and the beach.

Wednesday was extraordinary – many people offering their hands and hearts to make light work of an important annual event, in both our community life and in the lives of our guests, one of whom said that the day with St. Andrew's makes her not feel like a homeless woman, but a pretty one. What must God have thought of that moment?

It certainly felt as though we were faithfully focused on what God values.

This morning's readings ask, implore – really warn us to focus and value those things that God values, those things that are of God's making, not of our own wanting – God's needs rather than the human distractions that get in God's way.

In fact, Jesus offers us this declaration that we must be on our guard "against all kinds of greed; for **one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions**."

We might want to embroider that on a throw pillow (unless that throw pillow becomes a distraction or a possession that we have to protect .....).....

We are warned in the passage from Luke about the folly that comes from valuing possessions rather than people – we have siblings who ask Jesus to intervene and even up their inheritance, but Jesus rebukes them.

Is this a conversation that you can imagine or to which you can relate? Fighting over possessions or items of inheritance? If you have engaged in those conversations or you think they are on the horizon, this gospel is worth remembering and the cautionary tale of the Rich Fool is right on time.

Jesus tells the parable of this man, who is rich by any standard, his land produces abundantly. He has plenty, and in fact he has more than enough and decides he is going to build bigger buildings to hold more stuff.

There are a couple of things to check here.

First, the Rich Man is taking his own counsel. We are offered a glimpse of his inner monologue. He asks himself what he should do, and he comes up with his own solution – including the resulting sense of satisfaction that he anticipates. He has more grain than he can store, so he is going to pull down and build bigger barns to hold more stuff and then he is sure that his soul will delight and he'll be able to "eat, drink and be merry"!

So the first miss here is that he is consulting just with himself, which isn't God's desire for us. All that time spent in his own head, keeping his own counsel and formulating his own action plan is time spent disconnected from God, in prayer or in person and as is so often the case, listening to himself alone leads to a faulty, actually fatally, flawed plan. The second miss is that the Rich Man never looked outside of himself to check around his community to see what others needed. He had more than enough, and we are positive, because we have the benefit of historical hindsight – we know that there were others who were hungry, unhoused – orphaned and alone. The Rich Fool didn't check in with neighbors or others to see whether his abundance could feed, clothe or house a neighbor. Where was the love in the Rich Fool's plan? He stored stuff up for himself, not for the benefit of the Kingdom of God.

And we know this is folly and not God's plan because the jolting end of this parable is one thing that the man hadn't planned for – the end of his life.

"You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you."

This sanctuary has hosted thousands of funerals and celebrations of life. These sacramental and milestone gatherings come in every shape, from small, intimate only close family affairs, to enormous public gatherings with standing room only. Not once, not ever has a funeral or memorial service included a reflection or gratitude about how terrific the loved one was at choosing the best storage space, or a shared appreciation of how great the loved one was at accumulating stuff, or how they built a bigger barn or house or garage to hold more stuff. In fact many of us have lived through the residue of a loved one's passing when we have to go and clear out spaces in which our loved ones have lived.

Meaningful legacies and memorable memorial services ALWAYS highlight impactful experiences that the family members and friends have had with the person. Stories of generosity, or love made visible and embodied – the time that the person left work early to come to see a little league game, or the day the neighbor surprised you with a trip to the beach. Love letters and hilarious and loving voice mail messages, texts and beautifully handwritten notes. Or the time the person who has died offered a loving word, or solace or experience that allowed the recipient to feel seen and connected. Those are the themes of remembrances and powerful eulogies.

Those stories of love, connection, community and shared abundance are what is shared about us when we pass away. That is what endures. Our lasting legacy is the love that we put into this world. The love that we share with one another. The kind word, the anonymous gift, the open hearted sharing of abundance so that others have what they need.

We've joked about – and now scholarly articles are being written about the fact that the younger generation is not interested in the antiques and treasures that we've accumulated over the years. They don't want the dining table, sideboard or dishes or pewter mugs that we've carefully preserved for them.

I know that can feel disappointing, or perhaps sad. Yet, what they do want is the experience of sharing meal on those dishes, or using the pewter mugs or enjoying the piece of furniture and connecting to the stories that have been passed on through the generations. That is what is valuable – not the item itself but the connection to history, family and love that is part of our legacy.

Many weeks during the year, we have flowers that honor particular family member or friends. This morning we are remembering the extraordinary person that was Jason Haen on what would be his birthday. In the grief and joy that surrounds his birthday, it will undoubtedly be the shared experiences and kindness and marvelous parenting that he offered to his family

and to the world – that is what endures – his love and light and presence, that we miss until we are reunited in God's loving arms.

Love that endures is not about how much we have but how generously we share. It's not about how well we've provided for our own comfort, but how faithfully we've responded to God's call to live courageously, compassionately, engaged in community.

Love that endures is not the barns we build, but the bonds we form. It isn't the stuff we stash away, but the love we give away that outlasts us.

It will be the stories. The memories. The meals shared. The ways we made others feel seen, known, and cherished.

May we please be God's people who choose enduring love over temporary wealth. May we please be God's people known for kindness, not accumulation. May each of us be remembered for how we made others feel—seen, valued, cherished.

That is God's love and that is what will endure. Amen+