

Sermon Draft for August 10, 2025

Text: Luke 12:22–40

Sermon: “Consider The Ravens”

“All the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them” (v 30).

We are not told whether the rich fool, whose story came in last week’s Gospel, just before our Gospel reading today, was a Jew or a Gentile. We do know he was worried about his possessions. His money, his harvest, and the things money and abundant harvests could do for him were at the top of his mind. He knew he had great riches, and he wanted to hold on to what he had. So, he built bigger barns. Once he had a place to store all his stuff, then, and only then, could he be content and eat, drink, and be merry. With bigger barns, he thinks he can finally relax. But that is not how the story ends.

Before he could build his barns, he died. He was still filled with worry and stress about his stuff. At the beginning of the parable, he was a rich fool. At the end of the parable, he was a rich, dead fool.

He laid up treasure for himself but was not rich toward God. He was a spiritual orphan, cut off from the heavenly Father.

An orphan, of course, is a person we usually think of a child who has no parents. Our hearts go out to orphans, and we look for ways we can meet their needs for love and provision. But people can also make themselves orphans of a kind. We remember Jesus' parable of the prodigal son.

The young man cuts himself off from his father. He thinks that with his share of the inheritance, he'll have all he needs or even could ever want. Who needs a father? Better off without the old man! But you know what happens next: When the cash runs out, he finds himself alone and beyond anxious about his next meal.

A father is infinitely more precious than a portion of his wealth. But any time we worry about having enough stuff, money or the things it buys we're actually telling ourselves it's having fodder, not heavenly Father, that matters. We're making ourselves spiritual orphans.

We're forgetting that as children of the dear Father, we always have everything we fuss about because he provides.

Remember how it came out for the prodigal orphan: In returning to the father, he receives what really matters. The father embraces him even before he can speak his repentance. He lavishes great treasure upon him and welcomes him back as a son. So, it is with all who, by Christ's death that reconciles us to God, are enriched with the treasure our Father gives so generously (Luke 12:30–31).

However, most of us don't have the problem of the rich fool. Most of us can more easily relate to the situation of the disciples who have gathered to hear Jesus.

Again, we are not told the ethnic backgrounds of those gathered around Jesus as he teaches on the way to Jerusalem; many were probably Jews, but perhaps some were Gentiles.

Unlike the rich fool, they were not blessed with stockpiles of money and didn't need to worry about building bigger storehouses.

Their focus was on preserving what little they had. Jesus' first disciples were not, generally speaking, rich folks.

They lived from day to day and sometimes from meal to meal. But this also creates anxiety. Will there be enough? Will God really provide? How will God provide? Whether we are rich, poor, or somewhere in the middle, anxiety is our lot when we focus on our stuff. That anxiety makes us spiritual orphans, cutting us off from the heavenly Father.

As Jesus journeys to Jerusalem, he is teaching his followers to be disciples, not orphans. He teaches about the love and care of our Father in heaven, reminding us that our Father knows what we need and leads us to live by faith and not by sight. The nations of the world have their so-called gods. But the disciples of Jesus have a Father. Our Father knows our needs and provides all that is necessary.

To teach us about that Father's care, Jesus sets before us the ravens and the lilies. Most of the time we at best cast a quick glance in their direction, but he begs us to look deeply at these things that seem so ordinary and take to heart the care they receive from the heavenly Father. The rich fool needed bigger barns and was anxious until they could be constructed. Ravens do not sow and do not reap. They have no barns and apparently do not suffer from anxiety. God provides for them. He feeds them. And he cares for them.

Likewise, the lilies. They don't toil or spin, yet they are clothed with better raiment than King Solomon. If God so clothes what's here today and thrown in the fire tomorrow, how much more will he clothe his children who are infinitely more precious to him? It all sounds straightforward. Focus on the ravens and the lilies and don't stress about the details of life.

The problem is that, unlike the ravens, we sow, and we reap; unlike the lilies, we toil and we spin. We were created to work, but by our sinful nature we focus much of our attention on our labor and what it provides. Often, we think we'll find our value in our labor and the rewards it gives. A sense of importance comes from the work one contributes to the world.

Our sense of worth comes from financial security. Self-esteem comes from the things we acquire. Because these things are so important, we overwork, become absorbed by our work, and in the end set our hearts on the things of this world. And where our treasure is, there our hearts will be also.

When our value comes from our work and what it provides, we live as spiritual orphans. We look to our money, our possessions, and our work to give us the things that only a parent can give. Jesus reminds us, ***“The nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them”*** (v 30).

We have a Father who knows our needs, cares for us, and provides for all our wants of body and soul.

Our Father created us and continues to watch over us. Today's Psalm reminds us, ***“The Lord looks down from heaven; he sees all the children of man; from where he sits enthroned he looks out on all the inhabitants of the earth, he who fashions the hearts of them all and observes all their deeds”*** (Psalm 33:13–15). He sees us, he knows us, and he cares for us.

And that care does not just happen from a distance. We are God's flock, and our Lord Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd. Though we orphan ourselves from the Father, he loves us and sent his Son to be our Shepherd and gather us together and return us to himself. Because of the Good Shepherd laying down his life for the sheep and rising again, our Father has been pleased to give us the kingdom. The words Jesus uses describe a past action that happened without any merit or worthiness on our part.

Long before we could even begin to seek the kingdom of God, the Good Shepherd sought us and gave us the kingdom. In our baptism it became ours, and in his Word and at his table he provides us with all we need to remain dear children of our dear Father.

Then, because our Father knows our needs and provides, we can live not as spiritual orphans but generously. In our Father's care, our lives reflect not the anxiety coming from being spiritual orphans but the generosity coming from being beloved children. The things that are so important in our times of anxiety become the means whereby we care for others.

Our value does not come from what we have but from what he has done for us. The things we have, our money and our possessions, can be freely shared with those who are needy. Our treasure, our real treasure, is secure. And with our treasure secure, our hearts are freed from anxiety.

We sow, we reap, we toil, and we spin, not to earn our place or attain our value but to live faithfully as the dear children of our dear heavenly Father.

In Jesus name! Amen