

YOU CAN'T PUT A LUGGAGE RACK ON A HEARSE

Rev. Susan Bennett

In Luke 12 we find the familiar parable of the rich farmer who literally has more than he knows what to do with. In fact, he's so rich he has to tear down his old barns and build new ones just to create enough space to store his crops. And he's pretty full of himself: "I will pull down my barns and build larger ones. I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, and be merry.'"

And then, God shows up and calls the rich farmer a fool. I can't read this passage without stopping right there to try and imagine how profoundly awful it would be to be called a "fool" by God. Just thinking about it gives me the chills.

God says, "You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?"

As far as the farmer knows, he's anything but a fool. He's rich. He's financially secure. His worries are over. How can God call him a fool? Does God want us to be poor? Does God object to a little retirement planning? Does he have something against eating, drinking, and being merry?

I think not. I think God called this man a fool because he seemed to believe that he didn't need God; he didn't look for security in God; he didn't realize that life begins and ends with God and in between, God's still the one in control.

"I will do this, and I will do that, and then I'll do something else, and I'll reassure my soul that I've taken care of everything and all will be well." Where is his gratitude – gratitude not only to God, but to all the workers and servants who actually did the work that made his wealth possible? Where is his family? Is there no one he loves and cares for other than himself? Does he plan to give anything to those who need help? The rich farmer spends a lot of time on self-congratulation, but never realizes that all he is, all he has, comes from God and belongs to God. Including his life.

The world tempts us every day to focus on things instead of God. We are persuaded that we need a better car, a bigger television, a sleeker computer. We can come to believe that these are the things we need to be happy, and if we have an abundance of things, we're secure. And then God shows up, taps us on the shoulder, and reminds us who's really in charge.

Our paychecks may not be personally signed by Jesus Christ, but still we have a job and a livelihood because he is good to us. In him, as the scripture says, we live and move and have our being. Rich or poor, our gratitude and love belong to God and God alone; our future is wholly in his hands. It's time to be grateful; it's time to give back. And if we're looking for security, we find that in God and God alone.