

St. Andrew's Sermons
The Rev. John Rohrs
July 31, 2022

Before I say anything else, I want to thank you for all of the calls and emails and expressions of love this week. Our news has sparked a lot of sadness – on our end and yours – but also a lot of gratitude for all we have shared. It's been such a privilege. Andie and I will both have much more to say in the weeks ahead, but I did want to say an initial word of thanks for your grace and understanding. It's been a hard week, and you all have been so good to us. We are grateful.

We're also a little overwhelmed. The last time we moved we were coming from a small townhouse, with one-year-old Anna in tow. Our family has grown a bit since then, and so has our stuff. Holy moly, we have a lot of stuff. There's so much that we had to rent a storage unit to declutter before we list our house. Did you know that in the United States, there are as many storage unit facilities as all the McDonalds and Starbucks combined? That's amazing. And there's something uniquely American about them. Four out of every five storage units in the world are in this country.

In today's gospel, we meet a wealthy landowner who has storage problems of his own. "What should I do?" he wonders. "I have all these crops and no place to store them. I suppose I'll tear down my barn and build a bigger one. And then I'll relax: eat, drink and be merry.

You can feel the critique coming, but it takes an interesting turn. We expect Jesus to say something about caring for the poor or sharing our wealth, but his immediate concern is for this man – for the meaning and intention of his life. "This very night," Jesus says, "your life is being demanded of you. All these things you have prepared, whose will they be?"

In other words, we can't take it with us. What matters in life is not material possessions, because that's not what endures. What endures is our friendships and family, the lives we touch, the difference we make. What matters is being in relationship with one another and with God. That's fairly straightforward, maybe, but there's something else going on here, I think. This very night your life is being demanded of

you. There's a time element to what Jesus is saying. It's as if he knows that our worries and our wealth can keep us from living in the moment. It's easy to get stuck in the past or consumed by the future, but Jesus draws us back to now. This very night, he says. There's something about the presence and purpose of God that is always here right in front of us.

It's been hard for us to live in the moment this week. I keep thinking about all the memories and milestones we've shared over the last 13 years. I also can't help thinking about what's ahead – a new house, new schools, a new congregation. And I daresay it's probably been the same for you: a mixture of looking back with nostalgia and looking forward with anxiety about what comes next for St. Andrew's.

Jesus has a reminder for us – for me and for you. This very night our lives are being demanded of us. God is here in our midst. The call of the gospel comes to us in the present moment. It's here as we say our goodbyes but also as we greet newcomers who may be visiting for the first time. It's here in the mission and ministry that continues in this place – food for those who are hungry, healing for those who are sick, hope for those on the margins of life. What is being demanded of us is nothing more and nothing less than our hearts, full of love for each other, and full of love for whomever walks through those doors – today, tomorrow, and six months from now. Don't worry about the future. St. Andrew's will be just fine, because the presence and the purpose of God is always here right in front of us. Amen.