

Luke 12.16-31

2 Corinthians 9.6-15

The man in today's gospel story has a good harvest. His work in sowing, caring for and reaping the crops has paid off. Or maybe he's just been lucky? Or maybe God has blessed him?

However he sees it, it's time to make decisions for taking advantage of the harvest. There's no room in his current barns, so it's best to pull them down and build bigger ones. Then he'll have plenty stored up for a long and enjoyable life. We see in this is a very narrow focus. One centred on himself and his time ahead. Notice how many times he uses the words 'I', 'me' and 'my'. And he has a certainty that possessions would make for a good life. How would his actions have been different if he had widened his vision?

This parable reminded me of Joseph in the Old Testament. His brothers had sold him into slavery in Egypt. While in prison there he became known for his interpretation of dreams and ended up interpreting Pharaoh's dreams. In one of these, Pharaoh saw seven fat cows come out of the river to graze. They were followed by seven more cows, but these ones were in very poor condition. These skinny cows ate up the fat cows – and they weren't any better for it. Joseph's interpretation was that Egypt would have seven years of plentiful food followed by seven years of famine. His advice to Pharaoh was to organise for food to be put aside during the years of plenty to cover the years of famine. The plan impressed Pharaoh and he appointed Joseph to organise it.

Notice the difference in attitude between the rich man of the parable and Joseph. Both look ahead but Joseph also looks around at the wider community.

According to the website for the Action Against Hunger charity, there's enough food to feed everyone on the planet. Yet 8% of the population go hungry every day. Poverty is an obvious problem. But there's also conflict, and the climate crisis destroying our food sources.

In biblical times, the parable of the rich man would have been concerned with people's attitude to wealth. All through the Bible there's teaching on giving and how much one should give. One commentator describes Jesus as being impatient with the spirit of calculation involved in this!

How we think about personal wealth is still important, but nowadays we also need to consider the state of our planet. For many centuries the world population was quite small compared to the resources available. But in my lifetime, it has increased greatly with a corresponding pressure on the planet. *See graph of World Populations.* Back in the 1800s, scientists began to make public their findings that carbon dioxide in the atmosphere was affecting the climate. Since then, the certainty has only increased.

The season of Creation is relatively new in our church calendar. For many years we haven't thought that much about creation and the environment. We've even considered that God should be limited to the realm of the soul, whatever that means, rather than taken seriously as the creator.

Another version of Jesus' parable could go like this. Our country has been lucky enough to inherit a planet which is reasonably hospitable for us. There is increasing instability in the climate, but mostly that does not affect us so there's really no need to be too concerned. It's not as if *our* emissions control *our* climate. It's a worldwide issue.

New Zealand did sign up to the Paris agreement, which would require us to limit our emissions. That causes problems though, because taking it too seriously would affect our economic growth. Better that we store up for ourselves plenty of good things for the years to come. Then we'll be able to eat, drink and enjoy ourselves! Well, some of us would, anyway!

The parable of the rich man ended with God telling the man that his life will be over that very night. Who will then benefit from all the good things he has stored up? Maybe a new version will end with God telling us that all the good things we've stored up for our country will mean nothing when our world has become uninhabitable. So it will be when we have no respect for the creator or the creation.

Another ending might look at what happens when we try to control everything for our own benefit. We see this around the world in the desire to continue to use violence to conquer others, or to develop AI more quickly than it should be, in case someone else gets there first.

The season of creation should remind us that God is the creator, and that the creation is not just for us personally but for all people. We need to have a wider vision than the rich man in the parable.