

## “Letting Go”

Luke 12:13-21

“Tomorrow is letting go day, pastor, so we came to church tonight.” I raised an eyebrow in curiosity as I greeted her after Saturday evening worship. She hesitated. “We’re moving mother from her big, old beautiful home – home all her married life – into assisted living. Dad’s been gone ten years now and it’s time.” “How does she feel about it?” I asked. I waited for her carefully chosen words.

“Who knows? One minute she’s excited about the new place; the next she’s threatening to lock herself in the bedroom and never come out. I just wish she’d let go and let God.”

“Let go and let God.” What a simple and beautiful line – and how terrifyingly tough at the same time. Often I do not want to let go. I want to hang on with all my life. This is understandable when our lives are roller coaster rides and we hang on because we have a fear of flying off into space to perish.

Letting go in the baptized life on the other hand, is precisely what we do that we might live. We learn to release our grip on life, to release our desire to control life, and trust the One who makes his own in the waters.

A favorite story that preachers have used for years, describes a pre-school

child who gets his hand stuck in the cookie jar while sneaking a treat. He twists and turns that hand but he can't get it out. Finally, he has no choice but to call to his mother for help. After a quick look at his hand and the mouth of the jar, his mother gently says, "You'll be fine. Just open your hand and let go of the cookies."

That is often the story of our lives. We want to have more than we should have. We want to have it all, even if it makes us unhappy or ruins us. We may not know what to do and mothers are not always available to help us. Letting go is a spiritual matter at its heart.

Jesus told the parable of the rich fool who was such a successful farmer that he built new granaries to hold his surplus harvest. That very night he faced death – his soul was required of him. His life had become all about more, having more, earning more, working more, keeping more. He never considered when more would be enough, and he showed little interest in how the rest of the world was managing. He was smugly successful, unconcerned with God or neighbor. He didn't let go until God did it for him.

Listen to the parable: From Luke 12:13-21 . . . <sup>13</sup>Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me." <sup>14</sup>But he said to him, "Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?" <sup>15</sup>And he

said to them, "Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions." <sup>16</sup>Then he told them a parable: "The land of a rich man produced abundantly. <sup>17</sup>And he thought to himself, 'What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?' <sup>18</sup>Then he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. <sup>19</sup>And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.' <sup>20</sup>But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' <sup>21</sup>So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God."

Possessions are such tricky things. We may consider ourselves basically good, even generous. Compared to the really rich, we come off pretty well. And yet we're building homes double the size of the 1950's homes that surround our church and some of us long for one even larger.

The story of the little boy and the cookie jar reminds us that it is possible to be greedy with little as well as much. As Christians it's good we struggle with these questions, especially during the Lenten season.

I think of one of the Sunday mornings Adam Havel was doing the children's

sermon and gave the children two pieces of candy and asked them to share one of them with someone else. A little boy twisted his face in disgust. Letting go has many stories to tell.

As we continue to prepare for a June wedding, I thank God we had just one daughter. It was hard enough on me when Rachel moved to Columbus to go to college both emotionally and financially. For those first 18 years, I'd been her dad and she'd been my little girl. I always have flashbacks to living in Rolette, North Dakota on our first call where Rachel was born. Every afternoon during her first summer, I'd push her in the stroller to the post office to pick up our mail. We'd get stopped numerous times along Main St. for conversation and the blessing of the beautiful baby in the stroller. Then 18 years later, she was suddenly gone. Now we're deciding what the song will be for the father-daughter dance at the reception. Rachel's lobbying for "Butterfly Kisses" and not wanting to cry, I'm lobbying for "Let it Be." That is the pain of letting go, launching a child to maturity and letting go of parental responsibilities.

Aging snatches things from us as well. Our eyesight doesn't allow us to read or do other activities like we used to. Surgeries slow us down for months at a time. Only by accepting our new limits and letting go, is there peace.

No one is exempt from the need to let go. Along life's way others hurt us, whether intentionally or not. Will we nurse our hurt into a grudge and allow the grudge to become a constant companion? Or will we let it go?

A theologian once wrote, "Hatred is like burning down your house to get rid of a rat." The cost is too great. Let it go.

The waters of baptism assure us that whenever we need to let go, we are in Christ and we rise with him. As Jesus let go of all our sins on the cross to rise again, may we let go of our sins so that we, too, may rise again.

May the peace of God . . .

#732 - Morning Cry