

A couple weeks ago my sister and I were at my Mom's house cleaning out her garage. We were using my pick-up to take a load of junk to the dump just north of Factoria – or the Factoria Recycling and Transfer Station, as it's officially known. But we've always just called it The Dump. I hadn't been there in decades. When we drove up to the scale and received our weight-card we were told to follow the red line. This was all new – and, as we moved forward, I realized there had been a major upgrade since I'd been there last. As we followed the red line there was this interesting modern art sculpture on our right made of stainless steel and formed concrete all along the driveway. Then there were these large beds of rose bushes planted along the roadside. And the station itself was brand new and modern looking. Clearly, this wasn't just a dump. This was a Bellevue Dump.

But then we drove inside the station and got out and we were hit with that same old dump smell. A Bellevue dump is still just a dump. I backed the pick-up next to this huge pile of garbage beside several

other trucks and cars – and together we all joined in the tossing of our own junk onto the pile. I remember a couple in the pick-up next to us added this nice, long leather couch to the pile as I watched, as in the background a front-loader was moving these 10 ft-high piles of junk around.

In our gospel today Jesus tells the parable of The Rich Fool. The point of the parable isn't difficult to understand, but it bears constant repetition because it's so hard to live out. "One's life does not consist of possessions." This is about our stuff. What do we do with our stuff? Any archeologist would tell you that since the beginning of human history, any time people gather they soon create a dump nearby. But has there ever been a society in all history that has as much stuff as we have in 21st century America? We have an entire storage industry devoted to storing our excess junk. Think about it, we have so much stuff that we need to rent extra space for it. And at the same time, we have a

growing de-cluttering movement to help us decrease, organize, and beautify our stuff. We're nuts and out of control.

Let's go back to the Parable. The Rich Fool needs more barns. As I said, if he had lived today, he wouldn't have to tear down any barns. He would just go rent space at the public storage down the road. But we humans have a space problem.

But, then, notice why the Rich Fool wants the extra space to store his extra stuff. "I shall say to myself, 'Now . . . you have so many good things stored up for many years, rest, eat, drink, be merry.'" He wants security – and he wants more space to store more stuff so he will have the ability and time to relax.

So, the Rich Fool also has a time problem. He wants more time to enjoy the good things in life, which means he needs more stuff, which causes anxiety. Does he have enough stuff to be secure? Does he have enough time to relax, and be merry? Note: the very questions and efforts meant to lead to the good life, bring about his anxiety and

interfere with that quest. The Rich Fool suffers from a space-time problem.

And then comes the kicker at the end of the parable. “You fool, this very night your life will be demanded of you; and the things you have prepared, to whom will they belong?” The Rich Fool is destined to leave both space and time, as we all are. And all our stuff is going to the Recycling and Transfer Station.

In the old days when I went to the dump there would be big trucks parked on the lower level and you would throw your junk straight into the bed of the trucks from above where the public parked. But in the remodeled station it’s all just a huge, one-level cement floor as big as a football field, it seemed. And there was just this designated space where you parked and tossed your junk out onto the cement. Then the Front-loader would come along and sweep up the pile. That big machine reminded me of a croupier at a Las Vegas craps table, raking in the losers’ chips.

And we, dumping our stuff, are those losers, betting our lives on our stuff that will get us the good life, but it never does. All our stuff, even the good stuff – the leather couches, etc., that we think the kids will treasure forever, eventually they clean it out and it all ends up at the dump. Try as we might, we can't beautify and change the dump. No number of roses will cover the aroma. It will always smell of decay, because this world and all in, and of it, are passing away.

Jesus goes on a few verses after this parable to urge us to imitate the freedom of the birds of the sky and the lilies of the field. And, as I said, it's easier for us to understand His point than to practice it. But listening today to this parable is a good time for each of us to consider once again, not only our stuff, but also what we subconsciously are trying to gain from it all. Why do we have all this junk in our closets, attics, driveways, garages, rented storage places, vacation homes, bank safety deposit boxes? What do we think it will get us? More time for

real life? Let's think, how many of the anxieties we're feeling right now, are caused by trying to escape anxiety through the piling up of stuff?

“Thus will it be for the one who stores up treasure for himself but is not rich in what matters to God.” Life is not about more space, or more time, but about simplicity of life and pleasing the Lord, who has promised His Disciples an inexhaustible treasure in heaven beyond decay, that no moth can destroy, nor thief reach . . . For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.