

**Reflection on the Gospel-18th Sunday in Ordinary Time C
(Luke 12:13-21)**

-Veronica Lawson RSM

Our tradition tells us that “the earth and all that is in it belongs to God” (Psalm 24). That does not stop some people from arguing over possessions or even killing for them. It never has. The invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the protracted conflict that ensued should have been a lesson to the world. The supposed weapons of mass destruction did not exist. There was much coveted oil and that seems to have been the covert justification for an unconscionable invasion that cost countless lives. There seems to be something deep within the human psyche that continually seeks for more. Those who seek to be “rich toward God” or “rich in God” find life. Those who seek to be rich in material possessions, including the traditional lands of First Nations People, will simply be left, at life’s end, with a question: “To whom will this hoard belong?” The question is rhetorical and expects the answer of Psalm 24: “the earth and all that is in it belongs to God”.

Jesus is addressed as “teacher”, and is asked to force a decision in an inheritance debate. He demonstrates that he is “teacher” rather than “divider”. He tells a hard hitting story. He knows that story-telling is more effective in bringing people to life-giving decisions than is any attempt to bring down a definitive ruling, especially for those who surely know the law. His story is about a landowner who is blessed by an abundant harvest. The estate manager as well as the peasant workers and their families might reasonably expect a share in the profits, even a remission of the debts they inevitably carry. In this instance, the blessing of abundance turns the land-owner inwards rather than out towards others and so “toward God”. First person singular pronouns predominate: “What am *I* to do? *I* have no place....*I* will do this....*I* will... *I* will....*I* will” The futility or senselessness of stockpiling for personal gain is highlighted by the shift to second person singular, “*You* fool...”, and by the divine judgment on the landowner’s self-focus and greed. Greed appears in today’s reading from the letter to the Colossians. Here, greed is simply idolatry, worship of a false god (Col 3:5).

In these times of planetary vulnerability, there is some urgency about the call to place our trust in the goodness of a generous God, to reduce our ecological footprint and to acknowledge that the good things of the earth belong to God and to all of God’s people, not just to the privileged few. In refusing to “store up treasure” for our own selfish ends, we become forever “rich toward God”. This applies to nation-states as well as to individuals. We have some responsibility for what is done in our name, for the size and deployment of our foreign aid budget for instance. The command to “be on your guard, be ever vigilant” in this respect is a demand for gospel justice.

Ritual

Including excerpts from Veronica Lawson’s reflection and the State of the Environment report 2021.

Begin with three minutes contemplative silence.

Leader: Let us become attentive to Great Spirit within us as we become place our awareness upon our breath... our gathering place... our Country... our world today...

Silent pause

The abundance of Earth has been exploited. As in the case of the land-owner, it has been turned inwards to satisfy human greed, rather than outwards towards others and so toward God. We lament.

All: “Be on your guard, be ever vigilant.” (Lk 12:15)

Leader: Because of our futile and senseless stockpiling for personal gain, “*We are in an emergency situation for both biodiversity and climate.*” (Emma Johnston, chief author of the 2021 Australian State of the Environment Report). We lament.

All: “Be on your guard, be ever vigilant.”

Leader: As nation-states and as individuals we have some responsibility for what is done. We long for and demand Gospel justice.

All: “Be on your guard, be ever vigilant.”

Pause for a moment of contemplative silence.

Song: Karliene – *Mother Earth* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=calo1UGSDgw>

Listen to the animals
Listen to the trees
Listen to the spirits of the Earth
Begging us please
Stop listening to greed

Listen to the rivers
Listen to the sea
Listen to the spirits of the deep
Begging us please
Stop listening to greed

She sent the drought to warn us
She sent the storms to scold us
But we don't listen
We burn and we break
And we take and we take
And we take
Till it's too late

Oh where did the beasts go?
Where did the trees go?
Where will man go
When he has lost
The heartbeat
Beneath his feet

Oh this is our home
She gives us home
Mother Earth

Can you feel
Her heartbeat
Beneath your feet

Heartbeat
Beneath your feet
Heartbeat
Beneath your feet

Pause for a moment of contemplative silence.

Leader:

“More than 7 million hectares of habitat for threatened species was cleared or substantially degraded between 2000 and 2017”. (State of the Environment Report 2021)

Exploitation of Earth’s abundance is the root cause of the suffering of many places and species. I invite you now to name a species or place that you love which is now under threat. (You may like to place a symbol of this place/species in the centre of the circle.)

After each has shared, we say together “we remember you”.

All: We remember you.

Leader: As our Gospel speaks, we hear the urgency of the call...

To place our trust in the goodness of a generous God...

To reduce our ecological footprint...

And to acknowledge that the good things of Earth belong to God and to all of God’s people, not just to the privileged few.

All: Amen

Song: *Remember Who You Are* by Kathy Sherman (available on YouTube Music, iTunes, Spotify etc)

Earth are you with a human face.
Earth are you with a human heart.
Remember who you are.
Remember who you are.