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This poor guy in the crowd is calling out to Jesus. All he wants is his fair share. "Tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me," he says. He's maybe hoping that Jesus will act like the judges of old, or like the wise Solomon.

But just like we saw a couple weeks ago with Martha and Mary, Jesus does not get involved in sibling arguments. Not only that, he tells the man, and everyone else listening, an extremely harsh parable. Forget about your part of the inheritance, Jesus says. Forget about dreams of sitting in comfort and plenty, he tells the crowd, and us. This will all be taken away from you, in an instant!

I mean, did we really need this harsh lesson from mean Jesus on a week like this? This does not feel like a week of plenty, a week of ease and comfort. There was a horrible shooting in Manhattan, worsening famine in Gaza, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting shut down, there was a not-great jobs report, and then worse than that, the guy who sent out the report got fired. A restaurant owner not far from St Martin's was put in detention. In New York, the daughter of a priest, a college student, was detained when she went to her visa hearing.

Oh yeah, and we were under a heat dome for most of the week, followed by torrential rain and flooding.

We didn't need to hear from mean Jesus on a week like this. With news like we've had this week we have the urge to curl up on the couch with a bunch of comfort items around us and binge watch trashy TV. If anything, now seems like the exact right time to keep a few extra possessions on hand for the next storm, the next shelter in place disaster, the possible, probable, I don't know any more but maybe they are coming or have already been enacted, tariffs.

We really didn't need to hear a harsh message this week. But the message does not have to be as bad as it sounds.

Part of why today's Gospel reading is so bracing, is that it is cut off right in the middle of Jesus' sermon. If we keep reading, we see that Jesus keeps going with his stories and images. Immediately after the part we heard today, Jesus continues, "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about what you will eat, or what you will wear." He says, "Consider the ravens," and talks about how God provides for the birds and flowers and will provide for us too, that God will give us what we need, and so we don't have to be anxious about it all.

God will give us what we need. We don't have to be anxious about it. OK, Jesus, but then why did you need to kill off the rich man?

"You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you," says God to the man, who has decided to build bigger barns so he can sit pretty with his extra crops. I always read this as, You're going to die tonight. God is demanding your life, this very night.

The original Greek actually reads, "Fool! In this night your soul they demand from you." Your soul, your life, they demand from you. Who is the they? They could be God, or it could be, The Things.

You fool, says God, look at the plans you have made for your extra stuff. You will now need to tear down the barns you so carefully built, and build newer, bigger ones, not for you, for The Things. You are letting these things rule your life. This plan, for someday much later, after the barns have been torn down and bigger barns built, this plan that some day you will relax, what is that? You could relax now by giving your extra things to someone who needs them and just enjoying the stuff already in your barns.

You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. Your life is being demanded, not by God but by The Things. You are making a plan to work on behalf of The Things. Jesus is telling a parable that describes a lot of us, it is the dilemma many of us get ourselves into, that by the simple human need and desire for security and comfort we surround ourselves with so much stuff that it actually enslaves us. Jesus is flipping upside down our conventional notions of saving and acquiring as wise, our notion of giving freely as foolish.

No, Jesus is saying, giving some of your abundance to God and to fellow humans, this is not foolish but wise. The foolish thing is to keep your extra, because you may die tonight, sure, but even if you don't die right away, you will now be working for your things, not for yourself. The things will own you.

Your life is being demanded, by the things. The things own you. Consider, instead, the ravens. Jesus is trying to show us a new way, a way of holding our possessions lightly, a way of trusting God will show us how to get enough, a way of having what we need and also being able to help others. Able to give away some of our things. Able to step away from our work, to stop working on behalf of our things, to be able to work for ourselves, for others, for God.

Jesus is saying, stop fretting about that inheritance your brother got, stop striving for the next shiny thing, the raise, the promotion, the comfort that will come someday, when you finally have -- enough. Jesus is saying, you have enough right now. Jesus is saying, you are enough.

When we can hold our things more lightly, give some of our stuff away, we can let go of some of our anxieties as well. We can have more energy to respond to the bad news. When we can stop closing ourselves in our barns with our Netflix, we can be better able to go out and challenge the injustice happening around us.

St Martin's, let us get off the treadmill, just a bit. Stop letting the things own you. Let us all stop chasing bigger barns and cheaper eggs. Let go, just a little bit, and let's see what we can do with the freedom we will feel. Let go, and let's see what new riches are out there for us to find. Amen.