

I, I, my.
 I, I, my,
 I, my, my.
 I, my.

Eleven personal pronouns
 in three verses.

Such is the inner dialogue of the man
 in our parable this morning.

Considering his personal abundance,
 his very own accumulated produce.

Talking to himself.

Consulting no other person.

Regarding no relationships.

Remembering no God.

There's a sense his egocentrism could have just continued forever,
 unbounded.

So too, is the sense we get from the person who prompts the parable
 to begin with.

"Teacher," someone calls out from the crowd,
 "tell *my* brother to divide the family inheritance
 with *me*."

My and me.

No thought for the family.

Little regard for the brother.

No mention of God.

This person's egocentrism and self-focus
 goes all the way to triangulating Jesus
 and trying to get someone else on their side.

The person with the inheritance question calls Jesus "Teacher,"
 and, most appropriately then, Jesus lays out a teaching
 in the form of a parable about a rich man
 who had a prosperous year.

His land produced abundantly.

So abundantly, in fact, that his barns could not contain all the produce.

Here's where—let's call him "Barn Man"—hatches his scheme, in a little conversation with himself.

"I will do this:

I will pull down my barns,
(perfectly fine barns, we assume)
and build bigger ones,
and there I will store all my grain and my goods."

Barn Man even imagines the *future* conversation he'll have *with himself*, after he builds the bigger barns:

"And I will say to myself,

"Self, you have ample goods laid up for many years;
relax, eat, drink, be merry.""

Barn Man's greed is utterly self-focused.

He has turned inward so completely upon himself
that he has a consulting conversation with . . . himself.

A conversation that imagines bigger barns to store a bigger harvest.

Were there hungry people in his town?

Probably, but we'll never know;

and Barn Man didn't know either,

because he didn't think to wonder about them.

Could his children have used the grain?

Maybe, but Barn Man doesn't think about his children at all.

Was there a voice somewhere, a Scripture in the back of his mind,

that said "You shall not strip your vineyard bare,

but you shall leave some for the poor and the foreigner?"

It's possible, but Barn Man doesn't listen to it.

Barn Man had himself to think of and listen to.

I, I, my.

I, my, my.

I, my.

Finally, God *interrupts* Barn Man's internal monologue,
twisting his inward perspective.

God breaks in,

"YOU fool! This very night YOUR life is being demanded of YOU.

**And the things YOU have prepared,
WHOSE will they be?"**

The open question hangs there,
waiting for an answer to fall:

The things,
the barns,
the inheritance,
whose will they be?

They won't be *yours*.

And imagining them belonging to *anyone* other than you, Barn Man,
involves considering other people
and considering God.

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The sibling who wants her fair share of the inheritance,
the Barn Man who imagines bigger barns and nothing or no one else,
they seem like people from long ago
and characters in an exaggerated parable.

But they aren't.
They're also us.

They are any and all of us who are stuck in self-focused cycles.
They are any and all of us who go through life in a closed loop
of striving and climbing and accumulating
and perfecting and advancing and storing up
while thinking only of ourselves.

The sibling and Barn Man are any and all of us
wanting to be better and build bigger
and who, at our worst,
consult our own untrustworthy soul
for assurance that *that* life

of self-striving and self-storing and building bigger barns for *me*
is the *best* life.

But God has a different life in mind.
 That life that we *imagine* is life—
 the self-focused “I, I, My” life—
 that life is being demanded of us.

Jesus knew our propensity for the self-striving self-focused “I, I, My” life,
 and how it can alienate us from others and from God.
 So, he taught that no matter the extent of your toil,
 no matter the size of your barns,
 the “I, I, My” life is empty.
 God judges that self-focused life.

Jesus’ teaching has no problem
 with what we accumulate
 and what gifts we use to accumulate.
 It’s living in self-focused closed loops
 that’s the problem.
 So, the parable’s pregnant question
 “And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?”
 pushes us to consider how, if at all,
 we use the things we have prepared *to build up relationships*
 with others
 and with God.

So, what happens when the question, “Whose will these things be?”
 becomes the way we consider everything we accumulate?
 Everything we throw away?
 Everything we desire and strive for and climb toward?
 What if we are always listening for and hearing the question,
“The things you have prepared, whose will they be?”

It’s a tough question. A judging, convicting question.
 But it’s also a question to which Christ models an answer.
 Right here,
 every Sunday,
 at this table.

As self-focused Barn People,
 We may come to Communion
 thinking in terms of “I, I, My”:
 considering how here, I get *my* share of grace
 and forgiveness for *my* sins
 and strength for *my* faith.
 And we each do hear, “The Body of Christ, given for you”
 and “The Blood of Christ, shed for you.”
 And each is, indeed, for you.

But the Body and Blood of Christ isn't *only* for you.
 As we hear, individually, that these things are prepared for us,
 we also hear
 that the body is given and the blood is shed
 for the person in front of us,
 and the child behind us,
 and the person next to us.
 We also hear that these things are prepared and given
 for the person who hurt you or who annoys you,
 for the guest you don't yet know,
 for the person who is not here today.

Christ's presence and gifts at the table
 sweep away our self-focused “I, I, My” life
 by saying “For you. And you. And you.”
 At the table,
 the things prepared . . .
 they are everyone's.
 They are for all.

That's what Christ's Table teaches us about the Bigger Barns Life:
 True Life is not about barns, but about Body,
 broken and shared.
 Not about grain hoarded but Bread given for all.
 Not about the goods we have prepared but
 God's free goodness
 prepared and given away
 for the sake of the world.

“The things you have prepared, whose will they be?”

May Christ and this question
guide our lives.

AMEN.