



The Church of England  
in Essex and East London  

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Diocese of Chelmsford

## **Trinity 7**

You're going to need a bigger barn!

Sunday 3 August 2025

Luke 12 v13-21

The Venerable Kate Peacock

Archdeacon of Stansted

May I speak in the name of the Living God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

You're going to need a bigger barn! Pull it down and rebuild, bigger and better and the best barn ever. So full will it be, overflowing with golden grain, spilling from its doors. Such is the greatness of wealth and plenty. You're going to need a bigger barn, the biggest barn. The best barn.

Preaching on this parable, as I did in my final harvest festival in my beautiful rural parish back when I was a vicar in Hertfordshire was a tough gig. In the congregation that day were three local farmers who had toiled and laboured the hard graft of bringing in the harvest. Floodlights and machinery mean there was no rest; even at night. As one farmer said, once you start that combine, with the tractor and trailer alongside you just don't stop. Exhausting work. Relentless until it is done. So, these three much beloved farmers had come to church, a moment of rest and rejoicing after the unrelenting harvest work. All was safely gathered in. All had done well in recent years. All had built bigger barns that summer. And this was the Gospel for the day.

It was, just for a moment a bit awkward.

Because, on one very practical level, of course if your grain is not safely gathered into the barn you need more storage. More space. A bigger barn. It's common sense. It's practical. The grain needs protection from the weather and vermin. From damp and mould. The barn was a perfectly legitimate necessity. It was also the reality for my three farmers.

I'm delighted to say that at this point the stories of the parable and the three farmers in my congregation diverged. Our parable farmer is written into history and scripture as a hoarder – a person who held tightly onto his wealth. Of course, in our parable the farmer could have sold the grain immediately or just built a barn extension; but the farmer tore down the old, smaller barn and rebuilt a larger one. I suspect Jesus was making the point against wastefulness. Of hoarding. Of holding onto his wealth with a tight sweaty fist.

A person who chose not to think beyond himself to God or neighbour; and who failed to think kindly or generously about what he should do with his plenty. A man who wanted to enjoy the good things in life without thought for others. And without thought for God. A man who had much and who expected future bumper harvests that would again and again fill his giant barn.

A man who off the back of his success and shrewdness would be able to relax and eat and drink and be merry.

Now, there is a part of me that thinks fair enough. You've worked hard, you want to be able to relax and chill out a bit. Put your feet up and indulge in a glass of something delicious and a plate of something equally satisfying. Where's the harm. I deserve it....

I wonder how many of us would feel the same – the hard work needs a reward. The sweat and the graft warrant a treat. There's a reason our pubs and restaurants are full on a Friday night – reward night, time to kick back. I deserve this! So what is really being said here; is Jesus really saying that one cannot indulge or be treated, or relax?

I don't think so. Elsewhere in scripture Jesus enjoys meals, takes time out to rest and recover, attends a wedding feast with much merriment.

So, why not for this rich man? For two main reasons I think: –

Firstly, Jesus warns that your life does not consist of the abundance of possessions; and this is all the farmer is interested in. He has not thought about God. He just wants more for more's sake.

Secondly, we look to what Jesus says next which is an urge to the disciples not to worry – consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, yet God feeds them.

The context of this parable matters deeply. Jesus is saying it's not about the stuff – the possessions. That bank balance that makes you sleep easier, that new handbag that makes you feel a bit more glossy, the car that is a status symbol. You can let it go; because you don't need to worry, you can let go. You don't need to hold onto it tightly with gripped fist – your more, your big barn is no insurance against what might happen. God knows your needs and will provide.

And for those of us who do worry, and who do want a safety net, and a reassurance that we will survive a rainy day or worse? For those who say, that all sounds well and good, but quite frankly a bit naive?

Well, we look to the missing element. The other missing element in our parable – the element that sees the rich man was not just not rich towards God, but was also not rich towards his neighbour. His big barn of safety and security that allowed him to kick back and relax; was his alone. He gave no thanks to God for his plenty; and he looked only to his own needs. He did not ask; if God has given me so much – WHY. Why am I blessed with this abundance? What should I really do with it. He was leading a life of selfishness – and because he was blind to God he was also blind to his neighbour. So they hungry and homeless of his community were left destitute. Looking only to himself, he did not see that he could be an answer to someone else's prayer. His generosity could bless another. He lead a life of plenty but not of purpose.

One's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions – possessions are ours to share with purpose. Our gift, our generosity can bless others and in doing so give us purpose. Purpose that is task with meaning – and the meaning is, being alive to God and alive to neighbour. Alive to need and alive to God's will. God works his purpose out in us; and when we see each other with love and with the gaze of dignity we are cooperating with the movements of the spirit. When we are building bigger barns for our own sake; we are just building a barn, a storehouse of stuff that builds false security and false surety. For all our real hope and purpose is to be found in God and not on the High Street. For me the call of the Gospel today is not to put our trust in the barn or the stuff, but to live a life of purpose. Seeing our blessings and being a blessing to others. Amen.