

Sermon on Luke 12:15-21 / Harvest Festival 2023

Dear congregation! Once again we hear a well-known story for our harvest festival. Jesus tells the "parable of the rich grain farmer". Why does Jesus always speak in pictures and parables and not tell his listeners straight away what he wants to say? He obviously wants them to start thinking for themselves. Who is meant by this parable? Is it also about me and my life? With Jesus, we are allowed to use our own mind and heart to understand the meaning of his images and comparisons.

Of course, this parable is not only about the farmer's profession and agriculture. It is about life in general. The grain farmer is presented to us all as an example of what he does as a human being.



Obviously, he is a hardworking farmer to begin with. He works hard and manages well. His barn is filled to the roof with the harvest he has brought in. There is nothing wrong with that. Jesus certainly does not want to tell his listeners with the parable that they should put their hands in their laps. Without the harvest, without the farmer's grain, there would be nothing to eat. That is why I find the title in the English translation more appropriate: "the greedy farmer" It is not about wealth per se, but rather about how it is dealt with.

For the grain farmer, one good harvest is not enough. He builds a bigger barn to store his future harvests. If we look at this from a market economy perspective, the grain farmer thus keeps his grain off the market and ensures that prices rise. This is no longer about pure stockpiling, but about profit at the expense of the community. And that's when the story starts to turn negative. The grain farmer is only concerned with increasing his material wealth. Finally, he enlarges his barn even further.



I was inspired by a children's book and drew the barns depicted there from memory. In the end, the barn of the rich corn farmer no longer looks like a barn, but actually like? Yes, actually like a church, doesn't it? Wealth has become the most important thing in his life. He no longer has the possession, but the possession has him. And food has no longer become a means of living, but an investment.



But what kind of missed opportunity for life is revealed in this short story! For the listeners at that time, it was certainly right in front of their eyes: grain means flour means bread means life. Grain should not be an object of speculation because it is needed for daily bread. And perhaps that is why they immediately wished for a different continuation of the story: The rich grain farmer is not stingy, but uses his wealth in such a way that it also benefits others. He could share his

huge grain stock and help others. He could sell the grain at a reasonable price. In the end, he would also help himself. This is what the parable makes clear at the end.

For his life comes to an abrupt end. He dies overnight, they say. Nothing remains of his hoarded wealth. On the contrary, his soul has had none of it. His soul has come up short. The one-sided material provision only for himself and at the expense of the community has left him with a spiritual emptiness. He who hoards food lets his soul starve because it is only attached to material wealth. But man does not live by bread alone. The human soul needs mental and spiritual nourishment that resembles the treasures in heaven: Love, trust, respect, fellowship

Jesus certainly doesn't want to spark any gloating or resentment towards wealth with his story, but he wants to encourage me to recognise and do the right thing in the here and now: Don't wait until you think you have secured yourself sufficiently, but now is the time to do the good that needs to be done. And don't just worry about your material security, but above all about the mental and spiritual nourishment for your soul.

Yours Pastor Kai Thierbach