

SUNDAY SERMON – 9TH LUKE – THE RICH FOOL – 2015-11-22
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In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Most of you have heard me say before that we have the wrong perspective of who we are. Most of think that we have a soul and that we are our body. A better, more correct perspective is that we are a soul and that we have a body. When we die, our bodies return to the earth, becoming food for worms, whereas our souls live on forever. Our souls are actually the essential part of who we really are.

With that in mind, I have rewritten today's Gospel lesson, making it more contemporary and applicable to our lives and perspectives today. Here it goes.

There was a rich man or woman whose investments brought forth plentifully. He or she worked hard and played hard (but prayed almost not at all) all their lives and now their pension plan, social security, 401(K), tax sheltered annuity and other investments had really popped and they were ready to be enjoyed at the age of 65. They were ready to quit work and start really enjoying themselves, giving no thought to helping the poor, their place of worship or even their family members. They were only focused on looking out for themselves and enjoying their retirement.

The night after their retirement party, they had a conversation with themselves saying, *"Soul, you've worked hard all your life. It's now time to focus only on yourself. Your investments have paid off. Relax and enjoy yourself. Eat, drink and be merry."* Before they went to bed that night however, God came to them and said, *"You selfish fool. This night your soul is required of you. All that you have set aside for yourself, whose will it be? You have not even written a will, and if you had, you would have made no provision for your church, your family or for the poor. You now get to spend your eternal retirement in Hell."*

Father that's so harsh. Unfortunately it is how most of us have been programmed to think. If you work hard enough for 50 some years, and you live long enough, you took care of your spouse and your kids, and paid your minimum dues to the church, you are entitled to retire and now focus on yourself. Isn't this basically what the rich fool in today's Gospel reading just said? For Christians, there really is no retirement but

instead a repurposing of one's life after they quit their secular job or career. A Christian sees the opportunity to now focus not on being successful, or just enjoying themselves, but on being significant, on leaving the world a little better off in thanksgiving for having been greatly blessed and enabled to live into their retirement years.

Let's look at St. Paul's message to the Ephesians (4:1-7) in today's Epistle reading. St. Paul is writing from a Roman prison, begging the Christians in Ephesus to live lives worthy of being called a Christian, with humility and patience, forbearing one another in Christian love for one another, expressing unity in the peace of the Holy Spirit. As your priest, I am also begging you to rethink both your work life and retirement life plans. Focus not so much on your personal fulfillment but on giving back to God, to His Church and to charities aligned with our Orthodox Christian values. Do this while you still have time, talent and treasure to give.

Don't focus on living as large as possible in your golden years but on making as large a difference as possible before God calls you home. You may enjoy as many as five, ten or even fifty years in retirement on this earth. Wouldn't your time, talent and treasure be much better spent assuring your eternal home and permanent retirement in God's Kingdom? Now THAT is some prime real estate, where your investments continue to outperform expectations forever!

Rather than foolishly having a conversation with himself, a wise man or woman would get on their knees and have something like the following conversation with God. It's called a prayer of thanksgiving. *"O Lord my good and gracious God, you have blessed me with a full and productive work life. I have been able to work and You have enabled me to provide for my family, my church, for the poor and for myself. Lord thank you, thank you for these amazing blessings. Lord thank you also that you have enabled me to provide generously for my golden years. Help me Lord to be the best possible steward of my time, talent and treasure in my retirement years. Guide me now more than ever to know and to do that which you have called me to do for Your Kingdom. You have enabled me to be successful in my work life. Enable me now to be significant in my stewardship of time, talent and treasure as I retire from my work life and live fully for You and Your Church, for my family and for my neighbor in need that You have called me to serve. Thank you Lord for your great love."*

Brothers and sisters, you ARE a soul, you **have** a body. Prioritize caring for the spiritual health of your soul, while caring for your body as well, so that you can be productive for God's Kingdom in this life and live eternally in His Kingdom. Whether before or after age 65, all of us will have God come to us and require our soul from us. He will ask us what we have done to care for our souls and to be productive for His Kingdom, the Church. I pray that you may be able to give a good account and enjoy the full luxury and VIP benefits of living in God's Kingdom forever. Use your time on this earth wisely so that WHEN God calls you home, He does not call you a fool but instead says, *"Well done good and faithful steward. You have been faithful over a little. I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your Master."* (Matthew 25:21)

To quote Jesus at the end of today's Gospel, *"He who has ears to hear, let him hear."* (Luke 10:37)

To God be the glory, now and forever, and to the ages of ages, Amen.