

## **Taking it With You**

**August 22, 2004**

**Luke 12: 13-21, Hosea 11:1-11, Colossians 3:1-11**

**Two men appear in the Gospel lesson--a man with a request and, in Jesus' parable, a man with a problem. Neither of them comes off very well, but at first glance, neither of them seems all that bad. Let's take a closer look.**

**First the man with a request. "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." Now the man has a right to his share of the inheritance. What is wrong with his asking Jesus for help? To answer that question we need to look at the context. Jesus is in the middle of a teaching--a teaching about the challenges and costs of discipleship. He has told his listeners not to fear those who can kill the body. He has just reassured them that when they're dragged before the authorities the Holy Spirit will tell them what to say.**

**And then, suddenly, out of nowhere this man speaks up with his request. Let's call him "Les", because he has less than he would like--he has less than his share of his father's wealth. It doesn't sound as if Les has been listening, does it? Jesus is talking about discipleship and Les' thoughts are on his inheritance. No wonder Jesus warns him to beware of greed; No wonder he reminds him that one's life doesn't consist in possessions.**

**Then he tells the parable. Perhaps it was primarily for Les's benefit, but I'm sure it spoke to the multitude that first listened to it. I'm also sure that it speaks to us. Well, if Les has a name, then the wealthy farmer in the story deserves a name, too. Let's call him Richard, Rich for short. Again, Rich doesn't seem like a bad man. There's no indication that he got his wealth dishonestly--perhaps both good farming and good fortune brought about his bumper crop. And Rich is prudent; he decides to build bigger barns for his crop. In other words, he develops a good retirement plan. What's wrong with that? Doesn't Rich sound like he's living the American dream?**

**Perhaps that's just the problem. Perhaps Rich is too much like the ideal, individualistic, capitalistic American. Listen to his words again:**

**And he thought to himself. "What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops." Then he said, "I**