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St. Francis Day: Primary Text: Luke 12:13-21

4 October 2026

St. Francis, who we celebrate today, the patron saint of animals & the environment.

Given that, the Gospel appointed for his day from Luke seems an odd choice

The story starts with two brothers arguing over money.

Instead of settling their disagreement, as one brother demands,

Jesus tells a story, a story that includes

Neither inheritance nor siblings,

which is very Jesus-core

Jesus says, Once there was a man who had a good year, a good harvest,

So he builds new barns to store his goods and grains

. This man says to himself:

‘Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years;

relax, eat, drink, be merry.’”

Sounds like a dream retirement in many ways.

Sounds like he is planning for the future.

And what's so wrong with that?

When we find ourselves thinking, “& what's so wrong with that?” in Scripture,  
that is a awesome, faithful place to be.

“And what's so wrong with that” is an invitation to wonder,  
a chance to be curious and feel around in the text.

So in the story, the guy tells us how in control and how independent he feels

“What should I do, for I have no place to store **my** crops?”

<sup>18</sup>Then he said, “I will do this: I will pull down **my** barns

& build larger ones,

and there I will store all **my** grain and **my** goods.

<sup>19</sup>And I will say to **my** soul... ”

That’s 11 first person pronouns in 2.5 verses.

That’s more than 4 per verse

What’s really, really curious is that this guy is very much in the wrong field

If he wants to be in control

Every farmer’s yield is undeniably tied to things beyond their control.

& 2 back to back years can be very very different from on another

Too much water,

too little water,

temperatures too high,

temperatures too low,

temperatures just fine but at the wrong time,

a random bug who finds a crop is tasty.

So many things can turn a promising year

into a mediocre one, Or a bad year,

Or a devastating year.

Even for a hardy crop like grain

Like in today’s text.

And if all the conditions are favorable one year, which it seems that they were here,

It is physically impossible for one person to handle a crop

The size of this one, the size of one that would fill entire barns.

There must have been people working with him, for him

for months to make this incredible harvest happen.

No one can raise a bigger barn by himself, either.

Barn raising famously takes multiple people,

In 18th and 19th century barn raising was party time in rural America.

This person cannot take sole credit for his successful crop— and yet he does.

He does not recognize his interdependence.

He assumes a level of control that he does not have.

and that is why he is called a fool.

This isn't just a story about this guy, really. It's a story about us, too.

We want to be in control.

We want to feel secure, and that's understandable.

See Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

In reality, even the most independent among us can be brought up short by

Changes in policy might mean when we were once relatively safe,

Now maybe not so much,

by a medical diagnosis, by an accident

By a series of microdecisions that lead us somewhere

Recognizable that's difficult to untangle.

None of us knows what's going to happen next,

and depending on how we were raised,

that can be hard.

Francis gives us an example of someone who,

Found freedom in **dependence** and giving up control.

Born almost 900 years ago in what is now Italy,

Francis grew up in a very wealthy family

After being bedridden as a prisoner of war in his 20s,

he gave it all up. Francis went on to found

a new community

Known for radical poverty & humility,

Animals, particularly pets, are one way God gives us to see  
the positive side of dependence

Pets are very dependent on us,  
and we are okay with that at least most of the time  
Pets can be a cue for us to ponder  
How dependence can be a gift.

Stuffed animals, stuffies, provide company  
in the literal & metaphorical nights of our lives.  
We may be dependent on them to help us sleep at night.

Animals and the environment also teach us  
that being rich is not just about material possessions.  
Our own cats, Skittles & Ollie, make my family rich in laughter.  
Whether they're playing fetch—yes they do that,  
Or when Ollie is meowing loudly  
because he wants to be held.

Jeff and I watched a HUGE woodpecker this morning.  
His head was bright red. And he methodically worked his way up a tree.  
We've all experienced moments of connection in the mountains,  
On the lake, in our gardens, at the beach  
That remind of convince of us  
Of the majesty of this world.

So today we say thank you for that which helps us see the joy of interdependence,  
For the times that giving up our autonomy  
or having it wrested from us as the case so often is  
can allow more room for love.  
For companionship, and more.

So thanks be to God for Francis,  
Whose examples remind us of the many ways we can be rich  
rich in faith,  
Rich in kindness,  
Rich in imagination,  
Rich in gratefulness  
Rich in understanding  
& how embracing our interdependence  
Our lack of control can be a gift  
**If we are willing to unwrap it.**  
Amen.