

**Sonoraville Baptist Church**  
**Sunday, November 21, 2010 – 11:00 AM**  
**Rev. Steve Skates, Pastor**

**How to Have a Happy Thanksgiving - Luke 12:13-31**

**Introduction:** I came across this story of Thanksgiving called: A Change in Plans. See if you can relate. Martha Stewart will not be dining with us this Thanksgiving. I'm telling you in advance, so don't act surprised. Since Ms. Stewart won't be coming, I've made a few small changes:

Our sidewalk will not be lined with homemade, paper bag luminaries. After a trial run, it was decided that no matter how cleverly done, rows of flaming lunch sacks do not have the desired welcoming effect.

The dining table will not be covered with expensive linens, fancy China or crystal goblets. If possible, we will use dishes that match and everyone will get a fork. Since this IS Thanksgiving, we will refrain from using the Reindeer plates and the Santa napkins from last Christmas.

Our centerpiece will not be the tower of fresh fruit and flowers that I promised. Instead we will be displaying a hedgehog-like decoration hand-crafted from the finest construction paper. The artist assures me it is a turkey.

We will be dining fashionably late. The children will entertain you while you wait. I'm sure they will be happy to share every choice comment I have made regarding the Thanksgiving turkey hotline. Please remember that most of these comments were made at 5:00 AM upon discovering that the turkey was still hard enough to cut diamonds. As accompaniment to the children's recital, I will play a recording of tribal drumming. If the children tell you that I don't own a recording of tribal drumming, or that tribal drumming sounds suspiciously like a frozen turkey in a clothes dryer, ignore them. They are lying.

We toyed with the idea of ringing a silver bell to announce the start of our feast. However, we chose to keep our traditional method. When the smoke alarm sounds, please gather around the table and sit where you like. And, we will ask the children to sit at a separate table - in a separate room - next door!

Now I know you have all seen pictures of one person carving a turkey in front of a crowd of appreciative onlookers. This will not be happening at our dinner. For safety reasons, the turkey will be carved in a private ceremony. I stress "*private*" meaning: Do not, under any circumstances, enter the kitchen. Do not send small, unsuspecting children to check on my progress.

I have an electric knife and a hatchet if necessary. The turkey is unarmed. It stands to reason that I will eventually win. When I do, we will eat whatever is left.

Before I forget, there is one last change. Instead of offering a choice between 12 different desserts, we will be serving the traditional pumpkin pie, garnished with whipped cream and small fingerprints. You will still have a choice: take it or leave it.

Martha Stewart will not be dining with us this Thanksgiving.

Have you ever had one of those Thanksgivings? One of those days? One of those years? Well, if so, then hold that thought because this morning, I want to talk with you about how you can have a happy Thanksgiving, even if Martha Stewart doesn't show up.

Before we read our text, you have to know that beginning in vs. 1, Jesus has been speaking to the crowds of thousands, but more personally to His disciples, about some pretty deep and important issues such as the danger of hypocrisy and the high cost of being a bold and unashamed disciple of His. Then in vs. 13, a guy in the crowd blurts out a demand that Jesus settle a financial inheritance dispute between him and his brother.

Now this interruption would be like someone asking what the score of a Falcon's game was right in the middle of my message! By the timing of the question, it's obvious where this guy's head and heart is! This ole boy had not heard anything Jesus had said.

This inheritance issue was obviously the only thing on this mind. Greed, bitterness, and resentment will do that to you. It'll control you to the point where getting what you want is all that matters.

So Jesus responds to the real issue in this man's life – his covetous attitude - and then sets about telling a story to him and everyone else – a parable to illustrate the danger of greed and that there is more to life than the things you possess or do not possess. Let's read Luke 12:13-23.

I want to point out three things from this story that we need to learn so we can have a happy Thanksgiving, even if Martha Stewart doesn't show up. In fact, if we learn them, we can have a happy life. First, we must:

### **1. Keep Our Focus On The Main Thing**

Jesus calls this proverbial rich man a fool because his life was focused on the temporary stuff – stuff that can be here today and gone tomorrow – Stuff that can rust – Stuff that can deteriorate – Stuff that can be stolen by thieves or destroyed by wind or fire. This man was a fool because he failed to look at the bigger picture of life and some of the bigger questions of life – like whose he was, and what was his purpose in life.

Now, this can be a problem for anyone, no matter their social status. So this is not just an indictment on the rich. Poor folks can waste just as much energy griping about what others have who are better off just as easily as rich folks can be too preoccupied with keeping their stuff or trying to get more. And when they do, they have become slaves to their money or lack of it, and they measure their importance by how much stuff they have or don't have.

But Jesus reminds us that one's value is not based on how many toys you have. He also tells us that what God has in store for His children in His Kingdom is greater than anything we can ever accumulating in this life, and He wants us to base our life-choices on that knowledge.

Jesus illustrates His point beginning in vs. 24 by referring to the birds of the air who neither sow nor reap nor build storehouses and barns and yet they trust God to feed them as they go about doing what God intended birds to. He says that if they can do that with their little brains, why do we have such a hard time doing it? He says that we are of far greater value to God than all the birds!

You see, we were placed on earth as the Cadillac of God's creation. Maybe your Gen-X'ers don't understand that. Maybe I need to say that you were placed on earth as the Lamborghini or the Ferrari of God's creation. What I mean is that we are put here to represent God and to reflect God's nature, God's beauty, God's kindness, God's goodness and God's generosity.

So, if you're going to have a happy Thanksgiving this year, keep your focus on the really big picture. Focus on the main thing, and don't allow yourself to become sidetracked and distracted by all this other trivial stuff. In fact, whatever stuff you have, put it to use to build God's Kingdom.

Secondly, if you're going to have a happy Thanksgiving:

### **2. Remember Our Dependence on Others**

In this parable, Jesus also called this man a fool because he lived his life only with himself in mind – his own wants, wishes and desires. He seemed to live as though the whole world revolved around him and his wants.

In a story of just 107 words 15 of them are about the man himself - "I", "me", "my", "myself" – "my grain", "my crops", "my barns", "my goods", "my stuff."

How easy it is to forget just how interdependent we are! None of us can do a whole lot just by ourselves. I refer back to the story I told the other Wednesday night. Alex Haley, the author of "Roots," had an unusual picture hanging on his office wall. It was a picture of a turtle on top of a fence post. When anyone would ask him why it was there, Haley would say, "*Every time I write something significant, every time I read my words and think that they are wonderful, and begin to feel proud of myself, I look at the turtle on top of the fence post and remember that he didn't get there on his own. He had help.*" This should remind us...

You didn't come into this world on your own – that took your mom and dad's cooperation.

You don't eat, clothe yourselves or get a roof over your head on your own – others helped provide it.

You have others to thank for your toothpaste, soap, shampoo, deodorant and cologne to keep you smelling and looking good.

You don't get an education on your own – others had to study and sweat and stay up late at night preparing lessons or grading papers to help move you along in the education process.

You don't stay well on your own – doctors and nurses and pharmacists and dentists have all played a part in bringing you to where you are now.

You didn't pave the roads you drive on, and for that matter, you didn't assemble the car you drive either.

You didn't build this church on your own. Even the Bibles we read and the Sunday School lessons come to us because of the faithfulness and hard work of people before us

And we could on and on with this list, but you get the point.

Jesus said this man in the parable was a fool because he thought of himself as a self-made man. He never considered the contributions of all the others who had helped him along the way to his wealth. He never thought about who put him on the fence post, so he wasn't at all thankful.

As you celebrate Thanksgiving this week, take time to reflect and remember and give thanks for all who have played a part in helping you along the way. Set the example, be the role model around your table and invite others to follow. Finally, if you're going to have a happy Thanksgiving:

### 3. Remember Our Dependence on God

In this parable, Jesus also called this man a fool because he was living his life without recognizing his dependence on God. He saw himself as the master of his own destiny. He was in charge of his life. In fact, he almost seems to have made himself the god of his life - *"I'll say to myself, Self, you've done well! You've got it made and can now retire. Take it easy and have the time of your life!"*

He sounds like a lot of people today. I'm not just talking about the atheists and the agnostics either. There are plenty of religious folks who include church as one of the activities in their weekly schedules. But it is as if God has to go along with their agenda. They'll fit God into their schedules as long as there are not any other more important things to do. If something better or more important comes up, well, God has to wait. But He'd better be there when I need Him. He better show up when the money stops coming in, or when someone gets sick, or when some other crisis hits. That's the way some people think. It's all about them, and God is just a servant who needs to come a-running when the master rings the bell. They may never acknowledge that, but that is the reality to some people.

But God is God, my friends. He plays second fiddle to one. Someone said:

- We can take His name off our coins and our money
- We can remove the 10 Commandments from our Courts
- We can declare it unconstitutional to pray in school or other public gatherings
- We can forbid employees from wishing one another Merry Christmas
- We can remove every reminder of God from our national life
- But in doing so, we do not diminish God – we only diminish ourselves.
- We exclude Him from nothing - we only exclude ourselves

Trying to get rid of God or leave Him out of our lives is as foolish as trying to suck all the air out of the atmosphere. What I mean is that if you cut yourself off from Him, you are cutting yourself off from the very source of life itself.

So God comes to this man in this story, just at the moment he thought he had it made – just at the time he thought he would sit in the lap of luxury for the rest of his life. He reminds him who really was in control. Little did this man know that the rest of his life was just a matter of a few short hours. God came to him and called him a fool. He told him *"Tonight you're going to die. Now, who's going to get your barn full of stuff?"*

Notice God didn't say that this man had 6 months to live. He didn't say he had a week or even a day to get his life in order. He said, *"This very night your life will be demanded from you."* *"Tonight, you will stand before Me and give an account of your stewardship."*

I believe that the same thing God told this man, He has the right to tell anyone. We live and breathe and have our very being because God allows it. We'd better wise up to that fact, and remember it every day we live - We are solely and utterly dependent upon God.

**Conclusion:** In conclusion, Thanksgiving is a good time to remind ourselves that if we want to truly live happy and peaceful and purposeful lives, we must keep our focus on the main thing – and that is seeking first His Kingdom and His righteousness. (31). Remembering that we were not put on this earth to collect the most toys, but rather to give God the glory with our lives.

Thanksgiving is a time to pause and reflect on just how much we depend on others in our lives, and take the time to thank them.

And Thanksgiving is a good time to remind ourselves of our total dependence and reliance on God. And by so doing, it's a good time to demonstrate in practical ways, that He occupies first place in our lives. It's a good time to show Him just how much we trust Him to feed us and clothe us and take care of our needs.

Do those things and you won't even think about having to have a Martha Stewart Thanksgiving to be happy.