

# Sermon for Sunday, August 4, 2019 - "Ruptures"

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

August 4, 2019

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church

Decorah, Iowa

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[Click here to read scripture passages for the day.](#)

Beloved of God, grace to you and peace in the name of Jesus.

This story of the rich man is really sad, and not only because he hears he's going to die this very night. It's also really sad that he seems to be wandering around his farm talking to himself. It appears he has no one to consult about his plans - no family members, friends or spouse. Apparently, he doesn't even have a trusted hired hand to talk to about the problem of not enough storage for his crops.

Instead, he talks to himself and directly to his soul, saying, "What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops? I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry."

That all sounds so sad and lonely. I picture him pacing around in his bathrobe at 5:00 a.m., making these grandiose plans - plans that don't include anyone else. It seems that his great wealth has cut him off from other people. So rather than thinking, *I have so much, maybe I could share with others*, instead he plans to fortify his fixation on himself. He plans to live as an island unto himself. How sad.

And then he hears God say, "This very night your life is being demanded of you. This very night, everything will change. All your plans will come to naught."

Things can change in an instant. How well we know that. Even if we don't hear the words, "Your life is being demanded of you," there are so many events and words that rupture our lives: "There's been an accident;" "It is malignant;" "There is no heartbeat;" "I want a divorce;" "The funding has dried up;" "Shots were fired today in ..." "The medication isn't working." Sometimes such tears in the fabric of our lives happen abruptly, in an instant, sometimes with a slow unraveling.

My family and I are living through such a rending right now. I know so many of you have experienced similar trauma and heartbreak. And the people of Dayton, Ohio, and El Paso, Texas, are experiencing unimaginable pain that is becoming far too common in our country.

Life has a way of showing us that we are not actually the masters of our own destiny, that all our plans can come to naught. We are at the mercy of circumstances beyond our control. When such things happen, it is heart-wrenching and brutal, and yet such events also have a way of showing us what really matters.

In these times we see how much we need other people, how much we need God. None of us is an island. We are all interconnected. We are all dependent upon one another and God.

We forget this when we get busy with our own plans, our own efforts - all the tasks of daily life. It's so easy to get fixated on all our small problems and all our wants. It's so easy to think we'll be safe and secure if only we can get more stuff built, more things done, more for ourselves. We, too, can find ourselves wandering around in our bathrobes talking to ourselves, fixated on our selfish problems and plans.

Ruptures in our life expose all of that as ridiculous. They help us to see that what really matters is our connection to others and to God. Those connections are where our real hope and help are found.

That has certainly been the case for our family. We are so grateful to this congregation and to everyone who is offering help and support in so many ways. We know that we are being held in prayer every day and we feel that deep in our bones. We know God is with us in this pain and struggle every step of the way.

This is the case for the people of El Paso who today are lining up to give blood and who, for years, have been responding with great generosity and welcome to the asylum seekers from Central America entering their community.

Painful events have a way of revealing what matters most. They can also help to disrupt our selfish and greedy plans, plans that can keep us isolated from God and one another.

But how do we remember what matters most when the crisis passes, when we're back in the daily grind? How do we live more connected to God and other people during the mundane times? How do we keep working towards an end to gun violence and humane response to the needs of migrants even after the news cycle moves on?

One answer comes from our reading from Colossians today. Colossians tells us that a fundamental rupture has happened and continues to happen for us - we have died with Christ Jesus and have been raised with him. This changes everything for us, each day.

This rupture happens first in baptism and it happens again and again as we hear God's word that convicts us and raises us to new life.

We are convicted so that our own plans and schemes and wants and desires draw us away from God and others. And we are reminded that all of that is not who we really are. Rather, we all bear the image of the creator and Christ is in us all. And in Christ Jesus we are raised to new life again and again.

As Colossians says: "Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator. In that renewal there is no longer [any division among us] but Christ is all and in all!"

God's word of conviction and promise comes to us again and again to bring a needed rupture in our selfish and greedy plans. God's word strips away the robe-clothed old self and clothes us in our new selves.

God's word assures us that we have been given new life in Christ, a life of abundance and generosity, community and hope now and forever.

Let's take a moment for silent prayer.