In the parable contained in today's gospel, God calls the man who stores up an abundance of food for years "a fool." *God said to him, “You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?” So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich towards God*

Does this resonate with our experience of our society – panic buying and the need to buy a lot more than we could ever consume, just to "be safe" or to obtain a false sense of security. Is this a way that we are rich towards God. Surely not but then how do we become rich toward God?

In the way we use water and food, in the way we use our money and resources and in our care of all of creation, we can be "rich toward God" by becoming much more responsible stewards of what we have been blessed with, and this becomes especially true and personal when we begin to realize that our abundance is not meant to be consumed solely by us, but must be protected, cared for and properly distributed. But its easy to be condemning of ourselves and others for not getting this right.

 “This very night, your life is being demanded of you.”

When we hear this, we often tend to go to a place of anxiety. What if I have done it wrong? What if I have been looking at the wrong things, valuing the wrong things? And, of course, the tone of this parable is exactly that -- be on guard.

It seems natural that we would approach our lives with God checking and double-checking, living in perpetual anxiety. Will God catch us doing what we shouldn’t, like storing up treasures? But wait, who among us does not have a bank account? In fact, aren’t we constantly bombarded with messages that we should be storing up our wealth, so that we will have enough to get by, so that we won’t be caught unprepared in our earthly life?

I get the feeling, given how this whole story comes up in the Bible -- someone is asking Jesus to be the wise king, the arbiter of disputes, and he turns the tables, as he often does, and tells them a story instead -- that Jesus isn’t trying to add to our fears, but to ease them.

In fact, just after this parable, he goes on to the more familiar passage where he exhorts us not to worry about what we will eat, what we will wear -- to “consider the lilies.” Jesus suggests that our life with God is not just another realm where we have to wonder if we are getting it right; instead, most of our anxieties are unfounded because the only real world in which we actually live is God’s world.

“This very night, your life is being demanded of you,” says Jesus, who knows in saying this that our lives really belong to him, and he wants us to know this, too. And God’s dream for us, I think -- and it is a good one -- is that we live to discover this.

I love how Jesus puts it in this parable -- the rich man in the story is not criticized for storing up his treasures; he is criticized for storing up his treasures while not being “rich towards God.” I think we are so used to being grateful for the abundant ways in which God has blessed us that we can forget that this goes both ways, that part of discovering our true lives is to give our gifts back to God and to the world.

Storing up our treasures is fine as far as it goes, but our real value as Christians is what we risk living into our faith. When we are rich towards God. And as far as I can tell, as Christians this involves some very specific tasks: loving God and loving one another above all. But also forgiveness, generosity and hospitality.

Not just believing in these things, but living them. Incorporating them into our work and our play, our learning and our rest, our family and our friendships.

Ask ourselves each day, “Is this who God wants me to be?” -- not because we are afraid that God might be disappointed in us, but because of our joyful belief in all the good things that God has in store for us.

This very day our lives are being demanded of us. This very moment our lives are being demanded of us. Our real life. The one where we realize the abundant value of God’s love.