



It All Goes Back In the Box
Luke 12:32-40

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost ~ Sunday, August 11th, 2019
First Federated Church of Peoria, Illinois
The Rev. Dr. Forrest Krummel, Jr.

Text: Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. (v. 33b)

Years ago Sue and I were invited to a Monopoly party. When I was a kid, I loved the game. I loved playing with money. I loved buying and selling. It's fun to have hotels on Broadway and have someone land on it toward the end of the game. You can be a "robber baron" buying railroads and utilities. But up until that invitation to a Monopoly party, I had never played the game to the bitter end.

The husband of the host was a self-proclaimed "World Monopoly Champion". They'd been having Monopoly parties for a number of years. Over the Monopoly Board he strung what looked like little Christmas light but each bulb was in the shape of a little dog, or shoe or race car--the pieces of the Monopoly board.

That evening I played Monopoly like I play Bridge. I don't really take Bridge seriously. I don't really get into adding up the number of "points" that I have in my hand. I don't like having to "play" a hand while my partner watches--and I believe--judges my plays. I don't know what a rubber is in Bridge. If I'm on the winning team, fine. If not, fine, too.

As the game of Monopoly progressed one player after another dropped out, having run out of money. By the time that there were only two of us--the host and myself--I was bored, ready to be done, and do more serious socializing. I asked the host if he just wanted to call it quits.

"Do you concede?!" he said a little too triumphantly. The way that he asked his question awakened the dormant primal beast within me.

"No", I replied. So we played on. Everyone else had left the table. No one was watching but this was mano y mano. A half an hour or an hour later he was mortgaged to the hilt and out of money. I won. Now some people say that I'm a terrible winner. I walked into the kitchen where the other guests were gathered. "Guess who won?" I asked. "Meeeee! Bam!"

His wife was surprised, as was everyone else who knew my competitor well. He had never lost at Monopoly. And here's the ultimate kicker, we moved to Peoria before the next annual Monopoly Championship of the World event was held. Like Rocky Marciano, I was the undefeated and retired champion of the world!

As sweet as that victory was--I ponder from time to time if I should buy a cowboy belt with a plain buckle, glue a little Monopoly piece on the buckle, and send it to him...like I said, I can be a poor winner--as sweet as that victory was, here's the thing: when the game was over the pieces all went back into the box.

In his book, *When the Game Is Over: It All Goes Back in the Box*, minister and author John Ortberg wrote about the life lessons that he learned playing Monopoly with his grandmother. He called her "The Master of the Board". He learned that there were a few tricks of the trade. While he always wanted to hold on to his initial \$1500 from the bank, his grandmother knew that you don't win the game without risk. She spent every dollar she got. She bought every piece of property she could. She would mortgage her property to the hilt in order to buy more property. She understood that the name of the game was accumulating all that you could, that money was how you kept score and that the game goes to the swift. She played with reckless abandon.

John Ortberg could never beat his grandmother at Monopoly because she was one not to let you win. You had to earn it. You had to win on your own. Well, one day when Ortberg was ten years old, he beat his grandmother. Now he was "The Master of the Board". His grandmother, though, had one more lesson to teach him. After the game was over, after the gloating, all of the property, all of the houses, all of the hotels, all of the railroads, all of the utilities, and all of that money went back into the box.

Last week many of you heard my friend Elliott Renfroe talk about Jesus' parable of "bigger barns". In case you were not here, a brief version of the parable goes like this. There once was a man who was very successful. He had barns full of grain. And then he got another bountiful harvest, maybe his biggest harvest ever. Now he had a problem. What was he going to do with all of this excess grain. His barns were already full. It was then that he hit upon a solution, he'd tear down his old barns and build bigger ones. He went to bed that night contented with his bigger barns. He had a visitor that night, though; the Angel of Death. Jesus turned to his listeners and asked a very simple and profound question. Now who does the grain belong to?

This week's lesson is Part 2. It builds upon last week's teaching.

A few days ago someone began their sentence saying, "If I die..."

If?! There is no "If".

The clock of life is wound but once,

And no one has the power

To tell just when the hands will stop

At late or early hour.

To lose one's wealth is sad indeed,

To lose one's health is more,

To lost one's soul is such a loss

That no one can restore.

The present only is our own,

So live, love, toil with a will,

Place no faith in Tomorrow,

For the Clock may then be still.

Our days are numbered and known only to God. (Psalm 139) Our time on earth is limited. So, I believe that this begs the question, “What kind of legacy do you want to leave behind?” How do you want to be remembered? What do you want people to say about you?

In today’s lesson Jesus advises us to “Make purses that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.” Then he adds that where your treasure is, there will be our heart, also.

This has often been understood as an encouragement to get us to put our hearts into God’s work because our money will follow. But this is a misinterpretation of Jesus’ teaching. What he is really doing is making a statement of fact. “People’s hearts are in fact where their treasure is.” (Boring and Craddock, *The People’s New Testament Commentary*) In other words, “those who have their finances and property invested in secular and selfish pursuits can hardly claim that their hearts belong to God.” (ibid.)

I do not know if God has a Plan for our lives or not. But I do believe that God has a Purpose. The Westminster Divines said it best when they said that our Purpose is to glorify God for our game of life is over, everything goes back into the box.

To God be the glory. Amen.