

The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God wills stand forever... (Isaiah 40:8)

Forever is a long time.

It's hard to avoid a mindset on the here and now. We have trouble focusing on anything else, for example, if our basic needs are not met. We need food, we need water, we need shelter, we need clothing. Yet, even when those needs are met, our culture – with its seeking for profit through advertisements and pressure – doesn't help us move beyond these needs. So, we buy more stuff. We stock up on cheap food. We fall victim to fast-fashion and its terrible consequences for people and for creation. We build and buy bigger and bigger homes. For what? The here and now.

I think it's safe to say that we can all recognize the problems here. On the last Sunday in July, we will hear Jesus say as much when we hear again the Parable of the Rich Fool from Luke 12. In it, Jesus tells of a man whose land *produced plentifully, and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear 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."'* But God said to him, *'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?'* So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God" (12:16–21). Jesus is clear – if we store up treasures for ourselves and do not generously spread the wealth that God has given us, we are *foolish*. We're worse than unbelievers. And what will happen *forever* to those who foolishly cling to the short term pleasure and gain that comes from the things of this world? *They will be tormented day and night forever and ever* (Revelation 20:10). Forever is a long time!

Again, this is easy for us to nod in agreement with, even if it's harder to do in practice. But, there are other problems that are harder to recognize – and come to terms with. Idolatry isn't simply a matter of what we do with money and possessions. What I mean is that we have a natural problem with priorities. What do we – as parents, grandparents, and mentors – teach the coming generations about what is important? Is God's Word what we're passing on to our children, or are we letting our culture inculcate children in what they believe is right and wrong? Are we living out God's will in our own lives as examples to our children, or do our actions betray our words? Is God's love the center of our lives, or is some mushy, worldly 'love' what we're pointing them toward? Are God's gifts most important – so important that we attend worship every Sunday – or are we instilling in them the priority of sports, recreation, and other extracurriculars?

Possessions rust. Riches are easily spent or stolen. The world is passing away. Remember, forever is a *long* time. It's great if you want your children to succeed at sports or some other activity in the world. What, though, is our ultimate goal for the next generation? Think about it this way – what is going to be ultimately best for our children and grandchildren? In the end, ask yourself: Is _____ going to help me/my spouse/my children when they die? If the answer is 'no', then maybe it should, at the very least, be less of a priority than it currently is. And, if we really want what's best for the coming generations, then maybe we should get our priorities straight by teaching them what's really, ultimately, *forever* important.

-Pastor Squire

“Our sons and daughters we shall tell and they again to theirs, that generations yet unborn may teach them to their heirs. O teach them with all diligence the truths of God's own Word, to place in Him their confidence, to fear and trust their Lord, to learn that in our God alone their hope securely stands, that they may never doubt His love but walk in His commands.”

(“Let Children Hear the Mighty Deeds,” *LSB 867*, vv. 3–5)