



## [Luke 12:13-21](#)

Today's gospel story described one individual who had so much stuff that he tore down his barns and built new ones to hold everything. But then he died so it was all a waste. I can imagine Jesus' listeners must have had a good laugh about that. Most of them couldn't imagine being so wealthy that you would need bigger storage units, let alone demolishing the ones you have to build bigger ones.

Unfortunately, it's not a funny story any more. Because it's actually a good description of what humanity has done in the last hundred years. We have gotten hung up on having more and better. Corporations want us to buy their products and so they constantly encourage us to get more and to throw away what we already have. It's no secret that they use advertising and packaging to make us want more and to entice us to buy things we don't really need and hardly use.

And so we have to get bigger houses, bigger garages, more storage units to put all this stuff that we don't use but can't bear to part with, and when we do let it go much of it goes into the landfills.

On Thursday evening, we had a presentation on the Road to Zero Waste. The big learning for me was that recycling starts not when I wonder which bin to put something into, but with the decisions I make while I'm shopping. Every piece of packaging I buy has to go somewhere so when I buy food I need to think not just about whether it's local, organic or sustainably sourced but also about how it's packaged. Coated paper can't be recycled locally so disposable coffee cups and paper milk cartons are destined for the landfill. Plastic straws cannot be recycled

either, but we use 400,000 a day just in this county so say no to unnecessary straws.

It's a little ironic that since our successful campaign to reduce plastic pollution by eliminating single use plastic bags in the stores, the one place you can get a plastic bag is Farmers Market. But you can take them back the next week and reuse them rather than getting a new one every time.

As the resurrection people of God we are called to be good stewards of all that we are given, and that includes all the resources of the earth. But we live in a society that is only slowly waking up to the realities of waste, so it is up to us to take a leadership role. Here at St Benedict's we do many things really well:

- we use plates and mugs which can be washed rather than paper ones which cannot be recycled if they are coated or saturated with food waste. If you go to the trash cans of most churches on Monday morning they are bulging with discarded plates, cups and flatware. Not here.
- The Abundance Shop is a wonderful community resource for reusing and recycling. Very little that goes through that door goes into the trash. Our volunteers work diligently to make everything useful, or pass it on to another place where it can be used or recycled.
- Although we use a lot of paper, especially on Sunday mornings, all of it is recycled.

There are things we could do better;

- Our organic waste often goes into the trash instead of into the green bin. It's a long way to walk with last week's flowers or with food scraps and so we don't bother. JW is thinking about ways we

can more often get our organic waste in the green bin and going to be composted rather than dying slowly in the landfill

- We often waste electricity by leaving heaters on when we leave a room. Sometimes a heater left on on Sunday morning isn't discovered until Tuesday or even later in the week.
- We could choose to buy recycled goods – especially paper for the copier. If no-one buys recycled goods then things can't be recycled.

I imagine that when you look at your own life there are things you are doing well, and things that you could be doing better. Next time you put out the trash, take a moment to look at what's in the bin. Are there things there that you could be recycling or things that you bought which maybe you didn't need or packaging that could have been avoided?

Living as we do close by the ocean, we are more aware than many people of the effects of our behaviors on the oceans and the fish and mammals of the sea. But I want to share a short video with you.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YFZS3Vh4lfI>

Plastic is incredible useful but also incredibly damaging. All plastic except #6 can be recycled. Plastic bags cannot be recycled though the curbside system because they get stuck on the conveyer belt and gum up the works. But there are still bins at the grocery store where you can take plastic bags.

Much plastic #6 is Styrofoam. Which is being used less and less locally. Why? Because citizens have called for a ban on this Styrofoam which tends to break down quickly into small pieces and which cannot be recycled so lives on in the landfills and the oceans forever. Their work has not only reduced the use of Styrofoam cups and take out containers but also raised awareness. Last week I asked the manager of Ralph's

about Styrofoam trays being used for meat packaging. He told me that they are working on getting that changed. Citizen action makes a difference. The state ban on single use plastic bags also started as a citizen initiative.

Change does happen. It happens not just by each of us changing our individual buying behavior but it happens as we take action together. We can make a difference, but in order to do so we have to be willing to flex our citizen muscles. And that means getting involved in campaigns which use the political process.

Politics is the way that we get things done, or we don't get things done, as a society. Right now it's a discouraging time for the earth as we have elected leaders both locally and nationally who don't see saving and restoring the environment as a priority. The odds can seem overwhelming. But this is not a time for us to stop. We are the resurrection people. We know that God constantly brings good out of bad, light out of darkness, birth out of death.

Today I invite you to think about how you can take more action to bring about the world you want to see. We have made a difference, we are making a difference and we can make an even better difference.