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Grace Episcopal Church, Alexandria Virginia  
Gospel of Luke 12:13-21

You all know the Nicene Creed, and the Apostles' Creed, maybe even the Athanasian Creed, but I wonder if you have ever heard of the "toddler's creed"? Just like the first three, it's a statement of belief and it goes like this:

If I want it, it's mine. If I give it to you and change my mind later, it's still mine. If I take it away from you, it's mine. If it's mine it will never belong to anybody else, no matter what. If we are building something together, all the pieces are mine. If it looks just like mine, it's also mine.

For a two-year old, this creed is developmentally normal. Psychologists tell us that at this age, children realize for the first time that they are separate from others and they discover personal possession. They can become very dramatic and protective because they consider items that they care about to be actual extensions of themselves.<sup>1</sup> They perceive their things as actually being part of themselves.

We can nod knowingly or smile because we know this phase will pass when the stage of empathy and sharing begins. But in his parable, Jesus paints an extreme picture of a man who is still reciting the toddler's creed! I, me, my, and mine are all over this passage. In Jesus's illustration, the man was gifted with a bumper crop. But his attitude was the opposite of Jesus's teachings. Instead of affirming God, he affirmed himself. Instead of seeking contentment through giving, he sought it through keeping. Instead of giving thanks for the divine providence that brought him this surplus, he ignored God. His giant grain silo was filled, but his God silo was empty. So when he died, he was separated from his earthly wealth and since his God silo was empty, he had nothing to take to heaven. At his death, his hands were empty before God. He had lost everything. Jesus's parable presents this as a worst-case scenario.

This passage easily calls for a sermon on the dangers of hoarding. How storing without sharing is a sign of faithlessness in God's provision. How shocking it is that the self-storage industry brings in \$40B annually in revenue. How so many of us just have too much stuff. But on this day, I'm really not concerned about what's in your boxes. We all need possessions in order to live while we are here on earth. What worries me is when, like a toddler, I see someone treating their possessions like they are extensions of themselves. When an inner 2-year old manifests in someone who is not 2, life can get very twisted. Specifically, I'm thinking of when possessions receive better treatment than people. We have all seen this. Things that are destined to be meaningless dust are valued more than relationships destined for eternity. When I see this it worries me and has me wonder: the possession silo is clear as day but what's happening in that person's God silo?

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<sup>1</sup> //eac-network.org/4-strategies-toddler-enters-mine-stage/

What I hear in this passage is Jesus emphatically calling us to do whatever it takes to allow God to fill our God silo. When we let God fill us, we live with love for the Creator and the created. We live with connections through caring, sharing, advocacy and justice. We live immersed in prayers and actions that pull the Kingdom of God a little bit closer to earth so that God's will may be followed here as it is in heaven just a bit more. Do you see the shift? Do you see the untwisting when eternity is placed ahead of dust?

Here is what is amazing: When we live to fill our God silo, it is impossible for our possessions to be an extension of us. Why is that? It's impossible because we become the possession. As God's possession, we live into being an extension of God. This is what we are called to grapple with on a daily basis. Not to get twisted around with our possessions, but remain a possession and extension of God in all that we are and all that we say and do.

Now, no one said this is easy. Navigating our relationship between our possession silo and our God silo is challenging. Every so often we embarrass ourselves by having a toddler episode. But the good news is that God's Kingdom is near. God is lifting up the parts of us that fit the plan and always bearing down on those parts of us that don't. We know which parts don't fit because, like a perpetual tap on the shoulder, it's uncomfortable. What about this? What about that? God's persistence can be as irritating as a 2 year old! We too can be equally stubborn but God loves us so much that God never gives up on us. God never stops reminding us of whom we are meant to be. Do you see that you are too important and far too loved to be like the man who lost everything? Jesus told this extreme parable because it is the opposite of God's dream for us. When your life is demanded of you, God wants your arms overflowing with a rich life in him, not empty hands. A silo rich with a sense of God's presence in others and in creation. Rich with the Spirit stirring in your heart and tapping on your shoulder. Rich with the words of Jesus in Scripture guiding you to your place in the Kingdom. You are God's most precious possession. Since God is all things, then God can be a delightful 2-year old as well. For God calls you mine, and God's not letting you go.