

Scripture Study

Eighteenth Sunday in Easter– Cycle C



Opening prayer

Ecclesiastes 1:2; 2:21-23 (Ps 90:3-6,12-14,17) Colossians 3:1-5,9-11 Luke 12:13-21

Overview of the Gospel:

- Since last Sundays Gospel where Jesus taught his disciples the Our Father, he has driven a demon out a mute man, been accused of using the power of Beelzebul the prince of the demons, has taught several parables, and confronted the Pharisees by pronouncing a series of woes upon them for their hypocrisy (Luke 11:14—12:12).
- As he takes time from his journey to Jerusalem to teach the crowds, someone approaches him and asks him to make a judgment on a financial matter (verse 13).
- It was not uncommon for rabbis to be called upon to settle such disputes (see Numbers 27:1-11 and Deuteronomy 21:15ff). Jesus, however, refuses to get involved. Instead, he uses the occasion to warn against the dangers of materialism and greed. He then tells a parable which is known as the Parable of the Rich Fool.

Questions:

- In the First Reading what is the lament of the writer, Qoheleth (the name means “The Preacher”)? If earthly treasure is not lasting and “You can’t take it with you,” what kind of treasure does last? How does the Second Reading reinforce this point?
- Why does Jesus refuse to settle the dispute of the person in verses 13-14? How would you react if he refused to settle your dispute, but told a parable instead?
- In the parable of the rich fool, what is the man’s problem? His solution? Why is he a fool? What is the “punch line”?
- When have you been like the man in this story?
- Advertising is dedicated to making us believe the opposite of verse 15. What difference in lifestyle results from believing Jesus versus advertisements?
- In planning an investment portfolio to become “rich in what matters to God,” what will you do this week? This year?
- The thing we most set our heart on is our highest treasure (Matthew 6:21). What do you treasure the most?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 2535-36, 2544-48, 2551

Closing prayer

A person who lives as if he were to die everyday—given that our life is uncertain by definition—will not sin, for good fear extinguishes most of the disorder of our appetites; whereas he who thinks he has a long life ahead of him will easily let himself be dominated by pleasure. -- St. Athanasius

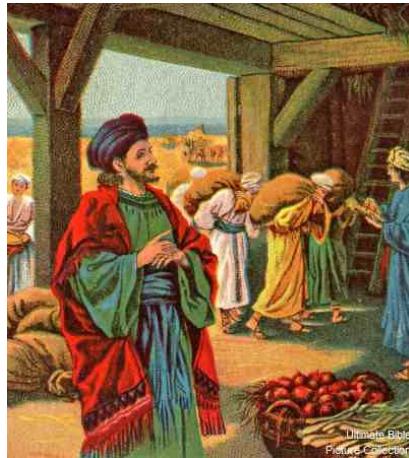
Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings found in the bulletin!

"One's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions"

Scripture: Luke 12:13-21

Meditation: Have you ever tried to settle a money dispute or an inheritance issue? Inheritance disputes are rarely ever easy to resolve, especially when the relatives or close associates of the dead benefactor can't agree on who should get what and who should get the most. Why did Jesus refuse to settle an inheritance dispute between two brothers? He saw that the heart of the issue was not justice or fairness but rather greed and possessiveness. The ten commandments were summarized into two prohibitions – do not worship false idols and do not covet what belongs to another. It's the flip side of the two great commandments – love God and love your neighbor. Jesus warned the man who wanted half of his brother's inheritance to "beware of all covetousness." To covet is to wish to get wrongfully what another possesses or to begrudge what God has given to another. Jesus restates the commandment "do not covet", but he also states that a person's life does not consist in the abundance of his or her possessions. Augustine of Hippo, a fifth century Church Father, comments on Jesus' words to the brother who wanted more:

Greed wants to divide, just as love desires to gather. What is the significance of "guard against all greed," unless it is "fill yourselves with love"? We, possessing love for our portion, inconvenience the Lord because of our brother just as that man did against his brother, but we do not use the same plea. He said, "Master, tell my brother



to divide the inheritance with me." We say, "Master, tell my brother that he may have my inheritance." [Sermon 265.9]

Jesus reinforces his point with a parable about a foolish rich man. Why does Jesus call this wealthy landowner a fool? Jesus does not fault the rich man for his industriousness and skill in acquiring wealth, but rather for his egoism and selfishness – *it's mine, all mine, and no one else's.* This parable is similar to the parable of the rich man who refused to give any help to the beggar Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). The rich fool had lost the capacity to be concerned for others. His life was consumed with his possessions and his only interests were in himself. His death was the final loss of his soul!

In the parable of the rich fool Jesus gives a lesson on using material possessions. It is in giving that we receive. Those who are rich towards God receive ample reward – not only in this life – but in eternity as well. Cyril of Alexandria, a fifth century Church

Father, comments on Jesus' word to be 'rich toward God':

It is true that a person's life is not from one's possessions or because of having an overabundance. He who is rich toward God is very blessed and has glorious hope. Who is he? Evidently, one who does not love wealth but rather loves virtue, and to whom few things are sufficient. It is one whose hand is open to the needs of the poor, comforting the sorrows of those in poverty according to his means and the utmost of his power. He gathers in the storehouses that are above and lays up treasures in heaven. Such a one shall find the interest of his virtue and the reward of his right and blameless life. [Commentary on Luke, Homily 89]

In this little parable Jesus probes our heart – where is your treasure? Treasure has a special connection to the heart, the place of desire and longing, the place of will and focus. The thing we most set our heart on is our highest treasure. What do you treasure above all else?

"Lord Jesus, free my heart from all possessiveness and from coveting what belongs to another. May I desire you alone as the one true treasure worth possessing above all else. Help me to make good use of the material blessings you give me that I may use them generously for your glory and for the good of others."

Meditation: © Don Schwager
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