

Read

Ecclesiastes 1:2; 2:21-23

Psalm 90:3-4, 5-6,
12-13, 14, 17

Colossians 3:1-5, 9-11

Luke 12:13-21

LIVING THE WORD

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 31, 2022



REFLECTION

Who is your God? Who do you worship? At first thought, the answer seems obvious: my God is the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. This is the God I worship, the Triune God who formed me in my mother's womb and continues to grace my life. This is the God we pray to at Mass. And yet . . .

How often does the god of stuff creep into our lives? The shiny and new drawing us in like kids to a candy store. Hail, the almighty Xbox! Praise the glorious iPhone! Suddenly, our possessions become the most important part of our lives, the focus of all our attention.

Jesus warns of this problem in today's Gospel: stuff can never be greater than the Spirit. The rich man in the parable has his priorities reversed. He cares so much about having space to store his bountiful harvest that he loses sight of the matters rich to God: love, respect, service, justice. These are true treasures. These are the "things"—the values and acts—that will lead us to eternal life. In the end, this is worth more than all the possessions in the world combined.

QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ How does the "god of stuff" creep into your life?
- ❖ What is one way you can focus on God the creator this week?



ACTION

Be on guard against little pockets of greed sneaking into your life. Our life is not our possessions. Guided by Jesus' warnings in today's Gospel, donate a box or two of extra clothes, books, or other possessions taking up storage space in your room. Rid yourself of excess stuff so you can have space to gather the things that matter: service, good friends, and neighborly help, to name just a few.



Read *The Screwtape Letters* by C. S. Lewis. Its unique letter-writing style and satirical approach deliver an important message about the Christian faith and the way sin can sneak into our lives.



July 31, 2022

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #114C

Ecclesiastes 1:2; 2:21-23

Psalm 90:3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 14, 17

Colossians 3:1-5, 9-11

Luke 12:13-21

Prepare for the Word

The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.

Leader's Context

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells the story of a rich man who has more wealth than he knows what to do with. The rich man's response is to tear down his barns and build larger ones to hold his surplus, but the man loses his life before he can enjoy his wealth. Jesus' parable is a clear warning against greed and the pursuit of possessions. Our reflection today is focused on how we can strengthen our hearts and minds to avoid becoming lost in the pursuit of material wealth. One of our key tools in that process is to develop a mentality of gratitude. It is that gratitude which allows us to see all of our possessions as blessings, and to recognize our call to bring blessings into the lives of those around us.

Q FOCUS: *Gratitude is our best weapon against greed and desire.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

On August 6, the Church celebrates the Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord. This is an important event for the Church to remember because it a turning point in Jesus' ministry on earth, when he is visibly revealed as divine, and the voice of the Father identifies Jesus as his Son. Even though it is only revealed to a few of his followers, it is recorded in the Gospel accounts so that future Christians may come to see more clearly Christ's divinity. It is also an occasion where we see Jesus alongside some of the great prophets of the Old Testament, and so we are able to

understand him as both the culmination of that long line of prophets as well as being the Messiah.

Church Teaching Connection

Charity is the Christian virtue that combats greed and the desire to store up wealth on earth. All Christians are called to show others love because God has first loved us. This love is expressed in our acts of charity toward others. It is a love that grounds all of our relationships and informs our actions. We give to others not only out of our abundance, but out of our need as well, a self-sacrificing type of love that is modeled on Christ's love for humanity (see *Deus caritas est*, 19-20).

Hear the Word

Use this resource, a lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.

Gospel Acclamation

Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Luke 12:13-21

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

All make the sign of the cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.

Someone in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, tell my brother to share the inheritance with me." He replied to him, "Friend, who appointed me as your judge and arbitrator?" Then he said to the crowd, "Take care to guard against all greed, for though one may be rich, one's life does not consist of possessions."

Then he told them a parable. "There was a rich man whose land produced a bountiful harvest. He asked himself, 'What shall I do, for I do not have

space to store my harvest?' And he said, 'This is what I shall do: I shall tear down my barns and build larger ones. There I shall store all my grain and other goods and I shall say to myself, "Now as for you, you have so many good things stored up for many years, rest, eat, drink, be merry!"' But God said to him, 'You fool, this night your life will be demanded of you; and the things you have prepared, to whom will they belong?' Thus will it be for all who store up treasure for themselves but are not rich in what matters to God."

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Everyone may be seated.

Reflect on the Word

When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:

The description of the rich man almost seems unbelievable in how focused he is on his material possessions. But we have to acknowledge that his way of thinking is present in all of us to a certain degree. We all own things, and we all desire to own more. There is a certain security that comes from possessing an item. It's yours, and nobody can take it away from you or use it without your permission. It is comforting when we know that something belongs to us in this way. And the temptation to own more, to own everything that we might ever need, also brings its own peace of mind. To live without fear of ever wanting for something is a powerful motivation.

► **What are some things that people might want to store up to feel this security?**

► **What are some of the dangers of wanting too much or taking things that we want but don't have a need for?**

There is another way to combat the fear of want. When we learn to detach ourselves from desire and material possessions, then everything we do own becomes a gift which we are grateful for. Gratitude can be a helpful tool in keeping ourselves from falling victim to the greed that Jesus warns against in this parable. Our gratitude is what allows us to say: "I have enough." It also reminds us that God is the one who will ultimately provide for all of our needs, including our most important one of salvation.

The end of the rich man's story is the lesson that we learn. What happened to him? Before he could even complete building his new barns and enjoying his wealth, he died. This is not to say that wealthy people die before they can enjoy their life. But the point of it is that when we focus on our material wealth, and we center our lives on accumulating more, we no longer look for "enough"; we only focus on "more." As a result of this, we lose the ability to truly live with gratitude toward God. We also lose sight of what we truly need, a deep relationship with God.

► [Teens may feel more comfortable just reflecting on this rather than sharing with the large group.] Can you think of an item, a material purchase, that you really wanted? What did you do, or what would you have done, to get it? Would or did getting that item keep you from ever wanting something again?

► **What might someone need to have "enough" in life?**

Reflecting on the concept of gratitude and recognizing the blessings in our lives, let's consider how we can properly live that virtue of gratitude. One way to think about gratitude is to use a metaphor of a glass of water. We're not talking about half-empty or half-full right now, because when we have "enough," we are completely full. And so when more blessings pour into our life, our glass will end up overflowing. When a grateful person receives a gift or blessing, they reflect that gratitude by bringing a blessing to someone else's life and turning to God in praise and thanksgiving.

Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the "Church Teaching Connection" on page 234.

Jesus warns us to guard against all greed, because life does not consist of possessions.

The rich man in the parable wastes his life in pursuit of more.

The rich man is the only person in the story besides God; it appears he doesn't think about any friends or family to share his wealth with.

Act on the Word

How Much Is Enough?

For this activity, you will need pens and paper or journals.

Begin this activity by diving the young people into small groups. Inform them that in this activity they will be doing some hypothetical financial planning. (It's okay if math is not their favorite subject!) After each step, allow for discussion and writing time.

As a first step, ask the teens to imagine that they could have as much money or wealth to support any lifestyle they might desire. How much would that cost? What kind of life would they live? They can brainstorm ideas in their group and write down their responses.

The next step is the opposite: imagining that times are not so kind, ask the young people to predict how little they think they would be capable of living off of. What would that life look like, and how much would it cost?

The third step is this: imagining that they have enough money to live comfortably (somewhere in between the first two answers), and then imagining that they suddenly were given a large amount of

money. What would they do with that money? How would their life change because of that?

In the final step, ask the young people to look back at all three of these different scenarios. Ask them to consider, for each one, what kind of relationships did they imagine for themselves? Did they even think about other people being present in those scenarios? In each hypothetical, what would their relationship be with their family? With their friends? With their spouse or significant other? Were the relationships different between scenarios? If so, how, and why?

Conclude by inviting the groups to share with the larger group some of the insights they gained from this activity. Additionally, now that they have somewhat of an outline of each scenario, where would God fit into the picture? Would their relationship with God differ in each one?

Closing Prayer

*God of life and death,
may we see your presence among us this day.*

*As we show our gratitude, help us use our
gifts, goods, and time
to give you glory and serve our sisters
and brothers.*

*We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ,
your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity
of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.*

For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at www.ltp.org/lwgr. Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.