

Alleluia, alleluia! Happy the poor in spirit; the kingdom of heaven is theirs! Alleluia!

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

To whom will all this wealth of yours go?

A man in the crowd said to Jesus, 'Master, tell my brother to give me a share of our inheritance.' 'My friend,' he replied 'who appointed me your judge, or the arbitrator of your claims?' Then he said to them, 'Watch, and be on your guard against avarice of any kind, for a man's life is not made secure by what he owns, even when he has more than he needs.'

Then he told them a parable: 'There was once a rich man who, having had a good harvest from his land, thought to himself, "What am I to do? I have not enough room to store my crops." Then he said, "This is what I will do: I will pull down my barns and build bigger ones, and store all my grain and my goods in them, and I will say to my soul: My soul, you have plenty of good things laid by for many years to come; take things easy, eat, drink, have a good time." But God said to him, "Fool! This very night the demand will be made for your soul; and this hoard of yours, whose will it be then?" So it is when a man stores up treasure for himself in place of making himself rich in the sight of God.'

■ The Gospel of the Lord.

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Reflections on the Gospel

TRUE AND FALSE SECURITY

We human beings are very insecure creatures. We are afraid for the future and, in that fear, desperately clutch at what would seem to offer protection and security against all manner of threats.

Wealth seems to offer the most obvious source of security: with wealth we shall not go hungry, we shall have a roof over our heads; we shall gain influence and power, the likelihood of good health, and the enjoyment of life's better things.

But the deep fear that feeds our insecurity also feeds the desire for wealth, so that the desire itself can become insatiable and eventually take over our lives, making us increasingly insensitive and to other, deeper values.

The parable in today's Gospel addresses this issue. The rich landowner, whose chief problem was finding space for his harvest, thought he could look forward to many years of the good life because of all the 'security' he thought he had stored up.

But, 'this very night' the demand is made for his 'soul'—that is, for his worth as a human being, a prerequisite for eternal life. It is exactly this deeper question that the man's preoccupation with his wealth has caused him to neglect.

The only security that is really lasting consists in being 'rich' in one's relationship with God, because this is the only relationship that transcends death.

But a preoccupation with wealth also poisons human relationships, and erodes the concern for others that is the basis of community. Attachment to wealth in this sense is incompatible with living, sharing and celebrating the hospitality of God.

Brendan Byrne, SJ

THE SAVING WORD

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME / C

04 AUGUST 2019

FIRST READING

Ecc 1:2; 2:21-23

A reading from the book of Ecclesiastes

What do people gain by all their work?

Vanity of vanities, the Preacher says. Vanity of vanities. All is vanity!

For so it is that a man who has laboured wisely, skilfully and successfully must leave what is his own to someone who has not toiled for it at all. This, too, is vanity and great injustice; for what does he gain for all the toil and strain that he has undergone under the sun? What of all his laborious days, his cares of office, his restless nights? This, too, is vanity.

■ The word of the Lord.

RESP PSALM

Ps 89:3-6, 12-14, 17. R. v. 1

R. In every age, O Lord, you have been our refuge.

1. You turn men back into dust / and say: 'Go back, sons of men.' / To your eyes a thousand years / are like yesterday, come and gone, / no more than a watch in the night. **R.**

2. You sweep men away like a dream, / like grass which springs up in the morning. / In the morning it springs up and flowers: / by evening it withers and fades. **R.**

3. Make us know the shortness of our life / that we may gain wisdom of heart. / Lord, relent! Is your anger for ever? / Show pity to your servants. **R.**

4. In the morning, fill us with your love; / we shall exult and rejoice all our days. / Let the favour of the Lord be upon us: / give success to the work of our hands. **R.**

SECOND READING

Col 3:1-5,9-11

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Colossians

Seek the things that are above, where Christ is.

Since you have been brought back to true life with Christ, you must look for the things that are in heaven, where Christ is, sitting at God's right hand. Let your thoughts be on heavenly things, not on the things that are on the earth,



because you have died, and now the life you have is hidden with Christ in God. But when Christ is revealed – and he is your life – you too will be revealed in all your glory with him.

That is why you must kill everything in you that belongs only to earthly life: fornication, impurity, guilty passion, evil desires and especially greed, which is the same thing as worshipping a false god; and never tell each other lies. You have stripped off your old behaviour with your old self, and you have put on a new self which will progress towards true knowledge the more it is renewed in the image of its creator; and in that image there is no room for distinction between Greek and Jew, between the circumcised or the uncircumcised, or between barbarian and Scythian, slave and free man. There is only Christ: he is everything and he is in everything.

■ The word of the Lord.