

18<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Sunday  
August 4, 2019  
“Life with Meaning”

Ecc 1:2...2:23

Col 3:1...11

Lk 12:13-21

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

There is in each of us a desire to possess. If we are honest, we must admit that we like to acquire things – especially if those things are attractive in some way. Now, I’m not speaking about the real necessities for living. I’m not speaking about stoves, refrigerators, freezers, motor vehicles – or a home to live in. These things are truly necessary in modern America.

What I’m speaking about are those things which are not necessary – things which are attractive in themselves because of their beauty, elegance, or special functionality. For some, it’s jewelry, timepieces, clothes, antiques – or even firearms. For others, it can be the latest and best book, automobile, pickup truck, technological gadget or electronic breakthrough.

However, no matter how much pleasure or satisfaction we have when we first acquire these things, it soon wears off. Then, we become restless to find something else that will bring us that interior excitement once again! Sadly, this becomes an endless cycle for most people – Because they never realize that no material thing can ever fulfill us in the way we were meant to be.

Fortunately, the scriptures for today have a great deal to say about possessions and the ephemeral (or transitory) satisfaction they bring.

Qoheleth was a very wise man who lived about 150 years before the time of Jesus. He was limited in his understanding by the Old Testament revelation which was incomplete before Jesus. He had no clear concept of life after death – However, he had great experience from his personal life and from what he observed about others.

What the word “vanity” attempts to translate is meaninglessness. It means emptiness and without satisfaction. For Qoheleth, life seemed to be without meaning. We strive so hard to acquire things, knowledge, and wisdom! However, we lose it all with death. He could not understand why God could make us the way we are – with all our desires, hopes, and dreams – and then have everything come to an abrupt end with death!

Of course, the real truth is that God never made us for ultimate satisfaction from the possession of anything in this life or in this world. God has made us for Himself – And as Augustine once said, “We are restless until we rest in Him!”

Today, in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus tells the upset brother that he did not come to arbitrate conflicts over material possessions. He came to teach us how to rise above the greed and possessiveness that ensnares so many then and now. Human life does not consist of possessions. Human life is about the way we use what we possess to benefit others, especially the poor, and give glory to God! The successful man in the parable had everything he wanted, but he wanted even more. His terrible failure was that he was not successful in the things that pertained to God!

In his Letter to the Colossians, St. Paul is much more graphic and direct. He exhorts us to overcome all those sins that every culture idolizes: immorality, impurity, passion, evil desires – and the greed to possess anything less than God Himself!

Furthermore, Paul teaches us that we, truly, can do this. We can become all that God wants us to be because we have been raised up with Jesus Christ. Jesus is at the right hand of God. And with Jesus we should, likewise, seek to be in God’s presence and united with Him someday!

Brothers and Sisters, as Christians and disciples, we have a tremendous advantage over non-believers. We know why we were made and the purpose of life. Life on this Earth might be painful and difficult – But we were made for much more than anything here!

So, let us pray, that we not squander the advantage we have – May we draw closer to Jesus each day – And may we use our gifts, talents, and possessions to further the Kingdom of God by blessing others who have so much less, while we are here!

Amen.

August 4, 2019

Msgr. Russell G. Terra