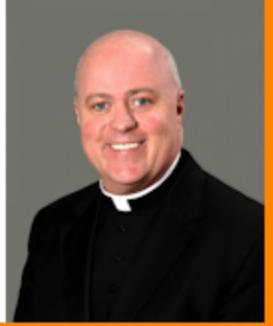


Father Chapin's Homily



October 21, 2018 – SONS OF ZEBEDEE

James and John, the Sons of Zebedee, came to Jesus and said, “Teacher we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.”

He replied “What do you wish for me to do?”

“Grant that in your glory that we may sit at your right and the other to your left.”

WOW

First, this is a pretty BOLD request.

Second, I bet Peter and the boys were not happy with this.

Pride always divides.

THEY want to be special.

But what is driving this?

This seems to be a universal issue.

Jockeying for position.

The whole GREED and ENVY thing.

This idea that if I can achieve prosperity and power I will be happy.

I know this might seem like a pretty clumsy request here but it really does illustrate a fundamental truth in the human condition.

This WANTING what the OTHER has.

But today I want to do something totally different.

Instead of going back over the well-trod squabble among the ranks of the disciples that we find in Mark chapter 10, I want TO TAKE a detour into Luke.

Chapter 12 to be specific.

For a couple reasons.

First, I LOVE the Gospel.

Second, it really DOES put the finger on what the problem is going here with James and John.

So ... WHERE to even start.

I guess we will start with Romans 8:28

And we know that all things work together for good, for them who love God and are called to his purpose.

Or to put it ANOTHER way, NOTHING happens in God's world by accident.

Really?

Can that be true?

The world is full of wickedness.

It plays out every day.

It is all over your TV.

Accusations.

The RANCOR and HATE

How do we RECONCILE what we see every day with the idea that NOTHING happens in God's world by accident.

Today, I want to talk about a parable I have been hearing my whole life.

By now Jesus is WELL KNOWN throughout the land of Judea.

HUGE crowds are following him.

Some looking for a healing.

Others a plate of food.

Others just curious.

And Jesus turns to his huge crowd and he says,

Beware of the LEAVEN of the Pharisees.

Now remember the disciples, just a few minutes ago, wanted to **BE** Pharisees.

This is what James and John are asking about today. They want to **BE** them.

Beware of the LEAVEN of the Pharisees.

So first of all, what is this leaven?

Well I don't know for sure, but I have HEARD, that when you mix flour and water and maybe an egg it just kind of sits there.

It doesn't DO anything.

But if you add just a LITTLE bit of leaven in there it will TAKE OVER and that dough is going to rise.

Jesus goes on to say that there is NOTHING that is hidden that will not be revealed and brought to light.

In other words, there are no SECRETS in heaven.

The LEAVEN is sin.

And all you need is a LITTLE bit in there and it will TAKE OVER

We might be able to do a good job hiding it but SOMEDAY it will be known.

And then he goes on to say something that I am quite sure shocked the crowds.

My friends, do not be afraid of those who KILL the body because after that they can do no more, but let me tell you the one you SHOULD fear.

Fear him who, **AFTER HE HAS KILLED**, has the power to cast you into Hell.

Of HIM, I say yes you should fear him.

So here we are.

These people are gathered around Jesus is giving the BEST homily ever heard.

The WORD made flesh explain the WORD.

They are hearing truth.

Real truth.

DIVINE truth.

And all the sudden **some BONE HEAD** in the crowd yells out,

Teacher tell my brother to divide his inheritance with me!

REALLY? Always ONE in every crowd.

Jesus responds “**Who made ME judge and arbitrator over you?**”

We see this all the time.

Some Senator or President is talking and someone interrupts to ask a question that has NOTHING to do with what they are talking about.

Because they are not LISTENING at all because they don't CARE what he is talking about.

All they care about is getting their question answered.

So, these crowds are hearing the GREATEST truth they have ever heard and THIS guy wants to argue over a will.

Now the bible does not recorded WHO this person is.

Or WHAT his beef is, but we can infer that someone has died.

The Law of Moses says 2/3 goes to three FIRST BORN son and 1/3 goes to the SECOND BORN.

So, I don't know what the deal was.

Maybe the FIRST BORN SON was not following the LAW or maybe they were arguing about what a 1/3 was? Or MAYBE the MATH just didn't add up.

Now remember Jesus is in the middle of talking about the LEAVEN.

He goes on to say

Beware of COVETOUSNESS, for life does NOT consist in the ABUNDANCE OF THINGS that one possesses.

WOW

Let me say that again.

Beware of covetousness, for life does NOT consists in the abundance of things that one possesses.

Now you contrast THAT to what this WORLD teaches.

HAPPINESS, CONTENTMENT, and SECURITY ALL come from the abundance of things that we process.

Isn't this what we believe?

If we can just achieve FINANCIAL SECURITY.

If we could just BUY THAT BIGGER HOUSE or that shiny BOAT.

THEN we will be happy.

BEWARE of covetousness.

So WHAT exactly IS covetousness?

Desiring what someone ELSE has.

If you put two babies in a room and one grabs an insignificant toy that is not being used, the other baby cries MINE.

IT IS JUST IN US

Life does NOT consist in the abundance of things that one possesses.

What are the Ten Commandments?

The Ten Commandments are God's will of our lives.

A blueprint on how to be a human being.

And what is the FINAL commandment?

The great crescendo?

THOU SHALL NOT COVET.

Because where your HEART is where your treasure is.

And where your treasure is WHAT you worship.

Which gets back to the FIRST commandment.

We saw this with the Rich Young Ruler.

He was a good guy.

He was following all the rules.

He built the parish hall.

But Jesus knew his secret and he reveals it when he LOOKS AT HIM WITH LOVE and says,

You are lacking in ONE thing. Go sell all you have and come follow me.

And he could not do that.

Where was HIS treasure?

Where HIS heart?

So let's get to this

The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest.

So this is good.

He was a good farmer.

I imagine he worked hard and this was the FRUIT of his labor.

And there is not a thing wrong with that ... YET

The man says to himself

What shall I do for I do not have space to store my crops? And then he says I know what I will do, I will tear down my old barns and build bigger ones and then I will say to my soul you have plenty stored up for years take your EASE. Eat drink and be merry.

So, let's pause here.

Is there anything wrong here?

This man has worked hard.

He has made a success for himself.

He has got to store it all SOMEWHERE or it will rot.

Just needs to expand his business.

Is this a sin?

He says it is harder for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God than a camel to pass though the eye of a needle.

Is wealth in and of itself sinful?

Well ... we will get back to that.

You know, I have been thinking about this.

AND I AM JUST TALKING ... BUT

WHAT IF, and of course we are just talking here, but WHAT IF ...

This Rich Farmer is the FATHER, that has recently died and is now got his kids squabbling over the will?

You know that guy complaining about his brother?

Maybe Jesus is telling THEIR story.

You know I have presided over funerals where the deceased is not even in the ground yet and the fighting about the will has already begun.

I have seen it.

I believe that if Jesus came today and gave this same message of truth he would be interrupted in the same way.

But let's get back to our question.

Is the accumulation of wealth in and of itself a sin?

Well let's get back to our Rich Farmer.

What did he say?

I will say to my SOUL you have many goods laid up for many years. TAKE YOUR EASE. EAT, DRINK, and be MERRY.

But God said to him FOOL!

This very night your soul will be required of you.

Then who will those things be which you have provided?

So Jesus goes on to say

This is how it will be for those who store up things for themselves but are not rich with God.

It is interesting that God calls him FOOL which we are commanded elsewhere to call no one.

It is a very derogatory term.

So here is my question.

WHAT was his sin?

WHY was God so irritated?

Is wealth sinful?

No.

Look at what this guy says

I will say to MY SOUL.

He is talking to his soul.

NOT to his wife. Hey honey I'm going to be able to take care of you.

NOT the kids.

I got the college fund figured out.

No.

He is talking to his soul.

He has got it figured out.

His FINANCES,

His SUCCESS,

Have become his Savior.

This is the problem with wealth.

It often leads to a false sense of security as we become ...

SELF SUFFICIENT,

SELF RELIANT,

And the problem with a self-sufficient and self-reliant man is that he does need anything, and he sure doesn't need God.

And like the Rich Young Ruler he was a GOOD guy.

They know all about him up at the synagogue.

He is a supporter.

And God calls him FOOL.

WHEN YOUR SOUL IS REQUIRED YOUR GOLD IS RETIRED.

When you cross over, the only thing you take is what your SOUL carries with you.
And if your soul has been CONSUMED with the RICHES, POWER, and LUSTS
of this world.

If THAT is where your treasure is.

If THAT is where your focus is.

Well than guess what?

You will crossover with an EMPTY SOUL.

I have been to many a gravesite and the ONE thing they have in common is they are
all dead.

Some have BIG tombstones.

Some have a little plaque.

But they are all dead. I wonder how many of them are spiritually dead.

You know what that saddest thing about this Rich Farmer whom God calls a fool?

What if that guy really was the Father of these two sons squabbling over the will?

WHAT did he teach those boys in his life?

The same LIE that he had lived and that is why they are fighting.

And THIS is his legacy.

Ecclesiastes 5:15-16 says,

As he came from his mother womb naked he shall return.

To go as he came.

And he shall take NOTHING of his labor in his hand.

And THAT is why you will never see a hearse pulling a U-Haul.

I heard about this woman who was buried in her Corvette.

I'm serous!

Did she really think that when she got to heaven the gates would open so she was just going to drive thru?

Such it is, for those who lay up treasure for themselves, but is not rich toward God.

This Rich Farmer had NO idea that this night his soul would be required of him.

Nor do we know the moment our soul will be required of us.

But let's talk about this rich farmer whom God calls a fool.

What IF he was the father of the two boys squabbling over the will?

What did he leave behind? What was his legacy?

Seems that the ELDER SON had bought in the BIG LIE.

Life consist in the abundance of things that we possess.

So, naturally, the MORE I can ACQUIRE, the HAPPIER I will.

EVEN AT THE EXPENSE OF MY BROTHER

Meanwhile the brother seethes with RAGE and JEALOUSY and GREED and RESENTMENT

THAT IS THE LEGACY of the Rich Farmer.

Even James and John felt that way.

Oh, if I could just be like those Pharisees.

If I can get what THEY have I will be happy.

Let's ask Jesus to sit at his right and left so we can make that happen.

You know years ago I was a stockbroker.

I invested money and there is nothing wrong with that.

But I have learned as a priest is that, no matter how good you are at investing, it's NOT going to last.

But investing in the KINGDOM OF GOD as you put your treasure IN HEAVEN will last forever.

Remember how we were talking about how ALL things work for good for those who love God and are called to his purpose?

And that NOTHING in God's world happens by accident?

Well that is indeed true.

But it is ALSO true that there are TWO worlds.

There is GOD'S WORLD and there is THE WORLD.

Jesus refers to Satan as the Prince of THE WORLD.

In GOD'S WORLD, all things work for good for those who love him and are called to his purpose and NOTHING happens by accident.

In THE WORLD it is GET WHAT YOU CAN

WHILE YOU CAN.

AS MUCH AS YOU CAN.

Even at the expense of your brother.

In GOD'S world TRUTH is TRUTH.

Absolute and immutable.

In THE world truth is well ... RELEVANT

Truth has been reduced to an opinion.

And my truth is just as good as your truth.

In fact my lie is just as good as your truth if you can't prove that I am lying.

They call this PLAUSIBLE DENIABILITY.

Jesus said to Pilate

For this reason I was born. For this reason I came into the world. To testify to the truth.

And Pilate asked TRUTH? What is truth?

And the world has been asking that question ever since.

In GOD'S WORLD truth is THE WORD.

The ETERNAL LOGOS.

In THE WORLD Truth is SPIN.

In THE WORLD Truth is whatever you want to make it as long as it serves your purpose.

In GOD'S WORLD a conscious contact with you creator is possible and he will give you a peace beyond imagination.

In GOD'S WORLD your life does not consist in the abundance of things that we come to process.

In THE WORLD if you achieve wealth you will be HAPPY.

And the one who dies with the most toys wins.

In GOD'S WORLD we are ALL in need of a Savior because we can't save ourselves.

We are all broken and what is broken cannot fix itself.

In THE WORLD if you get enough STUFF you can save yourself.

Your LEGACY aint gonna do it.

That library wing dedicated in your name aint gonna do it.

That parish hall you built aint gonna do it.

On that day people will say Lord, Lord did we not prophesize in your name?

Did we not drive out many demons and perform miracles IN YOUR NAME.

And I will say I do not even know who you are. Depart from me you evildoers.

NOW THEY WERE GOOD PEOPLE.

They were RELIGIOUS people.

They knew ALL ABOUT Jesus.

But they never MET him.

And they never MET him because they never NEEDED him.

James and John did not get it.

Peter and the other disciples didn't get it either.

Rich Young Ruler didn't get it.

The Rich Farmer didn't get.

His sons didn't get it.

How about YOU?

Do YOU get it?

Where is your heart?

WHAT is your treasure?

Do this for me ...

Close your eyes and imagine if you can, real close up, what the face of Jesus looks like.

Imagine his face right up in front of yours looking at you.

It is just that quick.

Death comes for us all.

And just like THAT he will be there.

THAT quick.

In that moment that your soul is required of you.

Beware of covetousness. Your life does not consist of the abundance of things you possess.

Let us be CONTENT with things we have.

Jesus promises us I will NEVER leave you nor will I ever forsake you.

So we may boldly say,

The Lord is my helper.

I do not fear.

What can man do to me?

Yes.

Death comes for us all.

And when we cross over there are really only TWO possibilities.

Either

I don't believe we have ever met.

OR

I got ya.

I promised you.

WELCOME HOME!