

**18TH SUNDAY ORD. (C)**  
**THINK OF WHAT IS ABOVE, NOT OF WHAT IS ON EARTH**

Why was St. Paul telling the Colossians to set their minds on things that are above, and not on things that are on earth? It was because through their baptism, they had died with Christ, and their life was hidden with Christ in God.

Qoheleth (the Preacher) who lived before Paul talked about the vanity of earthly things. He is reminding us now that all the things we see around us and we cherish are worthless if not used according to the mind of God. We toil and acquire all kinds of things but we shall leave them all on this earth. "Security and planning for the future are legitimate human concerns, but they should not be the ultimate purpose of our existence". In the gospel, Jesus told the one who asked Him to tell his brother to share with him the inheritance: "Take care to guard against all greed, for though one may be rich, one's life does not consist of possessions". For the love of money is the root of all evils," (1Tim.6:10).

Are possessions or riches bad? No, because Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were all rich. Job was a wealthy man; so was Judith, and many others. But they did not allow the wealth they acquired to be an obstacle between them and God. They served God faithfully, and they were blessed.

Possessions or riches become a bad thing due to how they are acquired and how they are used. If they are gotten through evil or foul means, then it is wrong. If they are used selfishly, then that is also wrong. Moreover, if that becomes the only focus of one's life then it is easy to forget about God. It is like the rich man described in the parable; his focus was on himself and not on anybody else. His wealth could not save him.

The Psalmist reminds us that we are like grass; we spring up early in the morning and wither in the evening. But as we heard in the second reading, our glory is in Christ Jesus so in order to appear with Him in glory we have to put to death the parts of us that are earthly: immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed that is idolatry. St. Paul tells us as he told the Colossians: "Stop lying to one another, since you have taken off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self,

which is being renewed, for knowledge, in the image of its creator”.  
“Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same intention (for whoever has suffered in the flesh has finished with sin), so as to live for the rest of your earthly life no longer by human desires but by the will of God. You have already spent enough time in doing what the Gentiles like to do, living in licentiousness, passions, revels, carousing, and lawless idolatry,” (1Pet.4:1-3).

Many Christians have forgotten that our final home is in heaven so we have tried and are trying to ‘amend’ the Ten Commandments to suit our earthly desires. The proper ‘amendment’ was made by Christ in His sermon on the mount, (Mt.5). We can revise what constitutes sin to make us feel good on earth but that does not mean that God will sign it into law and set us free.

Without God, all is vanity, so “grow rich in the sight of God”. Let us pray with the Psalmist: “Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain wisdom of heart. Return O Lord! How long? Have pity on your servants!”