

18th Sunday in Ordinary Time 2025 C

Those closing words of Jesus naturally raise the question: what DOES really matter to God? Perhaps the simplest way to summarize the common theme of these Scriptures is the searching question: ***What place do my possessions hold in my life? Do I own them, or do they own me?***

The Gospels don't tell us much about the possessions of Jesus himself. We know that the Magi brought Him gold, frankincense, and myrrh; and that at the end of his life he had a seamless tunic. He probably had some carpenter's tools and maybe some gifts from Mary and Joseph as a child. But we know he was fully human, and to live in this world takes stuff. Our material blessings are just that ... blessings, gifts, signs of God's care. While the things we see around us can preoccupy us, they are not problems in themselves, of course. We do need things of this world to sustain our lives and those who depend on us. The challenge arises, not with what is in our homes or storage sheds or bank accounts, ***but with what is in our hearts, where greed in all its forms can take root – for our things, yes; but also for attention, comfort, our personal preferences, being praised or feeling important.*** If we pin our hopes to what passes away, then our happiness can be lost in an instant. If we cannot resist always placing our own convenience or advantage ahead of our brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ, then we are in fact poor in what matters to God – mercy, kindness, respect, compassion, honesty, fidelity, love.

In the vision the Scriptures give us of possessions, we are stewards of the gifts of God, beginning with life itself. They are not really “our things,” but resources entrusted to us so we can engage in the work of God's own providential care for creation and especially the greatest part of that creation, the human person made in God's image. ***The real question about stewardship is not what we do with the 5 or 10 percent we might dedicate to charity, but how we manage the OTHER 90 or 95%.*** If we lose our sense of stewardship, being coworkers with God, then we end up like that reading from Ecclesiastes – burdened by anxiety, resentment, grief, restlessness, even despair. Those who simply possess things can also give

them away, and live in freedom; but those who are so possessed by things that they cannot give are living a kind of self-imposed servitude.

The Creed reminds us weekly that we are created to live forever, in the communion of saints; ***and there, wealth is measured, not in how much we have managed to accumulate for ourselves, but in how much we have given away*** – not only of material goods, but of our time, our attention, our concern, our love, overcoming greed in all the forms it might take. It is fairly easy to write a check or drop something in the Salvation Army clothing drive; but while that is a start, it is not yet complete charity. The meaning of charity is seen fully in the Eucharist ... an exchange between persons that gives AND receives, open to a relationship. True charity gives in a way that recognizes human dignity in the other rather than merely feeling self-satisfied at our own generosity. Jesus does not give Himself to us here so that we are satisfied and leave Him alone ... He gives so that we can draw ever closer in a Communion of love and life.

Thanks for the ways you are already so generous for the sake of the Gospel. This week, give away even one thing that you would be inclined to keep for yourself – a monetary donation, perhaps; but also a compliment, a smile, an hour of time, a listening ear, something that responds to what another person really needs. ***That kind of giving is the wisest of investments, building up lasting wealth, making us rich in what matters to God.***