

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time C/2019

The readings of this Sunday talk about the wisdom of life. They show that it is wiser to rely on God than on material possessions. They invite us to build our happiness on lasting values rather than on precarious ideals.

The first reading describes the vanity of human life. It shows that it is absurd to work so hard with wisdom, intelligence and skill for one day to leave one's property to someone else who did not do anything to deserve it. It also shows that there is no profit for a man to labor so hard when by the end of the day all he gets is sorrow and grief.

What is behind this text is the idea that material possessions are not a guarantee of human happiness. There is also the idea that, in spite of their success, human beings are fragile and mortal. The last idea is related to the truth that God alone is the guarantee of human's happiness.

This text allows us to understand the stakes of today's Gospel as Jesus is talking about the misfortune of human greed. First of all, the Gospel starts with the story of a young man who wanted Jesus to help him settle a dispute with his brother over their inheritance. Then, it gives the warning of Jesus over the drama of human greed.

After that, it reports the parable that Jesus gave about a man who grew rich, but died just when he thought it was time for him to start enjoying the fruits of his hard work. The Gospel ends up with Jesus' warning over storing up treasure for oneself rather than to grow rich in what matters to God.

What do we learn from this Gospel? Today I want to talk about the fragility of human success. In fact, we all have been educated with the idea that we have to work hard in order to succeed in our enterprise. And it is true that when we do so and give the best of ourselves at what we are undertaking, our dreams become reality.

We have also been told that if we do not do anything, nobody will do it for us. That is equally true because if we are not accountable and responsible for our acts, nobody will do so in our place.

When by the end of the day, with all that philosophy in mind, we can look at our material possessions, at all the goods accumulated over the years and at our capacities of providing for our needs, we can say that we have really succeeded.

However, our success, as beautiful and deserved as it might be, is always fragile and precarious. Why? The outcome of our life does not depend on our success. If it were so, we would have been in control of our life as we do with our material possessions and success.

In truth, our life does not depend on things we possess, but rather on God who can dispose of it as he likes. This inconvenient truth is what Jesus wants to bring to our awareness in the parable of the man who grew rich.

For Jesus, indeed, the willingness to live only for material possessions and success is not only foolish, but it is also the root of so much pain and suffering. In fact, most of the headaches and heartaches, the long nights without sleep and full of anxiety that people have, are usually over things that, when they die, they do not take with them.

As human experience has taught us, many disputes among family members and many never-ending court cases that have destroyed family ties and relationships, are all over

money and inheritance. And yet, the ultimate good that someone can wish for himself, which is, peace and eternal life, does not depend on those material possessions.

That is why when Jesus rebukes the gentleman who requests that he help him resolve their dispute over heritage with his brother, he wants to draw our attention to the fact that we should never make the material possessions the reason why we live. In other words, when we seek only perishing values, one day we will be confronted with the truth that we are never satisfied, because they cannot save us.

By saying so, is Jesus trying to scare us about money and possessions as though they were bad things? No; the point of Jesus in the parable instead is to warn us about the blindness that riches and success create. He wants us to be aware of the danger of closing up our heart to the plea of our fellow humans and of God alike because of our possessions.

Of course, the rich man of the parable has worked hard in order to achieve the success he had. The problem, however, is that the outcome of his life did not depend on him and on his success. As the parable shows, what he had accumulated had been enjoyed by others who did not work for it.

Moreover, Jesus wants that we come to understand that life is a gift received from God; so are the things we own in this world. If so, we are not our own masters, but rather the stewards of God's many gifts. What God expects from us is a good governance of the things he has given us. To ignore God, as though our possessions suffice for us, is to declare ourselves our own boss. And that is foolish.

Plus, common sense teaches that, in spite of the satisfaction material things can give us, it is impossible to build heaven on earth. If our philosophy of life is, then, "We live only once, therefore, let us enjoy life", we will one day be in trouble when those things cannot save us. That is why to grow rich in what matters to God is more important than to rely simply on material possessions. After all, God alone is the true wealth that nobody will take away from us.

As it appears, at the heart of Jesus' teaching there has always been the idea that our true fulfillment can only be found in heaven. The world, on the contrary, is temporary and transitory. Because of that, when we are still on earth we should be doing all we can to secure our place in eternity. Therefore, instead of focusing the whole energy on acquiring wealth and storing up for oneself in order to have security for the future, it would be better to do everything for God.

May God, then, set us free from the illusion that success and possessions are the only reason why we live. May he spiritually set us free so that we come to understand that life is more than the riches we cannot take with us to the grave! May he help us grow rich in what matters to him and not to us. ! May God bless you all!

Ecclesiastes 1: 2; 2: 21-23; Colossians 3: 1-5, 9-11; Luke 12: 13-21



Homily Date: August 04, 2019
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Contact: www.mbala.org
Document Name: 20190804homily.pdf