

18th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C

GOSPEL

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A man in the crowd said to Jesus, 'Master, tell my brother to give me a share of our inheritance.' 'My friend,' he replied, 'who appointed me your judge, or the arbitrator of your claims?' Then he said to them, 'Watch, and be on your guard against avarice of any kind, for a man's life is not made secure by what he owns, even when he has more than he needs.'

Then he told them a parable: "There was once a rich man who, having had a good harvest from his land, thought to himself, "What am I to do? I have not enough room to store my crops." Then he said, "This is what I will do: I will pull down my barns and build bigger ones, and store all my grain and my goods in them, and I will say to my soul: My soul, you have plenty of good things laid by for many years to come; take things easy, eat, drink, have a good time." But God said to him, "Fool! This very night the demand will be made for your soul; and this hoard of yours, whose will it be then?" So it is when a man stores up treasure for himself in place of making himself rich in the sight of God.'

(Luke 12:13–21)

DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- According to the law of Israel, if a person had more than they needed, there was a requirement to share the excess with those who did not have enough. The goods of the earth belong to all.
- The Acts of the Apostles indicates that the early church members shared their wealth so that each would have what they needed (Acts 2:44–45).
- St John Chrysostom wrote, '*Not to enable the poor to share in our goods is to steal from them and deprive them of life. The goods we possess are not ours but theirs.*'
- One of the major themes of Luke's Gospel is the right use of wealth and money.

EXPLORING THE WORD

Jesus finds himself in a situation where he is asked to render judgment on a claim made by one brother against another. In a sense, this is a recognition of Jesus' authority because a rabbi was expected to be able to make judgments on all facets of law. According to the law, the firstborn son inherited a double portion of his father's inheritance—that is, twice as much as that received by each of his brothers (Deuteronomy 21:17). Perhaps this man's brother was not keeping the law. But Jesus refuses

to be drawn into such a debate because this is not what his mission is about. He has come to establish a new situation, where women and men are drawn into God's reign. The parable of the unwise man makes the point. A person's life is not made secure by what they own. Better instead to be storing up riches in heaven than in the here and now.

- Discuss these words of Dom Helder Camara:
I used to think when I was a child that Christ might have been exaggerating when he warned about the danger of wealth. Today I know better. I know how very hard it is to be rich and still keep the milk of human kindness. Money has a dangerous way of putting scales on one's eyes, a dangerous way of freezing people's hands, eyes, lips and hearts.
- There are also many examples of wealthy people who have undertaken extensive works of philanthropy. Explore some of those. Why do you think some people act in this way?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- How important is the acquisition of material wealth to you? Does it distract you from what is really important?
- What do you need to do better to make yourself 'rich in the eyes of God'?
- We so often hear of wealthy people who do not seem able to find happiness despite their wealth. Who are some of those and what has befallen them? Have you ever experienced a time when material comfort was no buffer against suffering? Have you ever experienced great happiness in spite of not having a lot of material wealth? Share your reflections.
- Approach this teaching two ways this week: reflect on the attitudes and values you need to cultivate to be rich in the sight of God; share some of your excess wealth with those in need.
- Use today's gospel acclamation this week. Reflect each day on this saying of Jesus. What does it mean to be 'poor in spirit'?

*Happy the poor in spirit;
the kingdom of heaven is theirs!*

