

18th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Luke 12:13-21

We continue reading from this section of Luke's gospel,
in which Jesus is journeying to Jerusalem one last time, to the Cross.
Recall, therefore, the particular note of urgency that colors what Jesus says and does.
The urgency comes from the Cross – not because tragedy awaits,
but because greater love awaits.

Here, along the way, Jesus is speaking to a huge crowd.
The content of the parable is seemingly more straightforward than previous discourses.
The preceding interaction, however, is jarring.

Let us revisit the interaction so to highlight what is initially unsettling.
Always bear in mind that *how* Jesus says what he says is extremely important
(not to mention what he does *not* say, i.e. the “silences” of Jesus).

From this crowd “someone” makes a request:
“Teacher, tell my brother to share the inheritance with me”
It seems to be a somewhat random request, especially given the preceding discourse
in which Jesus speaks about the Holy Spirit.
We have a strange start to this interaction.
It would be like going to hear Rudy Giuliani speak on his foreign policy,
and shouting from the crowd, “Fix my car!”
random

All awkwardness aside, let us presume that this person simply senses
the compassion and the qualified leadership of Christ,
and, with trusting spontaneity, asks to be relieved of something burdensome to him
(if there is anyone who can help, as this “someone” sensed, it should be Jesus).
And in response to this reasonable plea, Jesus seems to jump all over the poor fellow:
“Who appointed me as your judge?”

As an innocent bystander, thinking in simple terms of simple human interaction
(not really knowing Jesus yet), I would have been tempted to say,
“Whoa, whoa, relax. The guy just wants his due.”
Even *knowing* Jesus, the response is surprising.
Not only that, Jesus further exposes this fellow,
and embarrasses him in front of the whole crowd.
He is asking for fairness, and Jesus seems to present him as a prime example of greed
Thank you Jesus !

The incident is analogous to the wedding feast at Cana,
where Jesus is seemingly dismissive of his mother.
Mary says, "They have no wine",
to which Jesus responds, "Woman, how does your concern affect me?"
How insensitive and rude!

What is the real situation then?
Is Jesus in a bad mood?
Is Jesus revealing that he does not really care about the details of our lives?
Is he sometimes quite simply insensitive?
After all, we do believe him to be God, and we perhaps should not expect God
to get too entangled in the messiness of human affairs and emotions...

Well, if the reason for all that Jesus does is love, then the answers are necessarily "no".
It is important always, in faith, to re-situate whom we believe Jesus to be
whenever we probe a discourse or an encounter or a gesture of his.
Jesus is the God-man.
If Jesus is the God-man, then divine love informs all of his emotions.
His emotions are real and full, but they are in perfect harmony with divine love.
And so Jesus is *never* in a bad mood – which implies

- a lack of intelligence
- a lack of deeper love

[What exactly is a bad mood anyway?

A bad mood is essentially anger casting a long shadow,
affecting our perspective and our actions.]

If Jesus is the God-man, then every aspect of human life has been taken hold of;
and every detail is therefore important.

If Jesus is the God-man, God-who-is-love become human,
then he is never rude or insensitive.
(In fact, Jesus had the most acute sensitivity ever.)

As we saw in the encounter with Martha and Mary two Sundays ago,
Jesus simply is unbelievably focused, engages in "tough love",
and seizes every opportunity to teach.

Jesus is lovingly tough on this fellow, and he teaches him.

The incident *then* serves Jesus to address the crowd,
to caution against greed and to teach in parable form.

Jesus speaks and acts precisely as the God-man, and in the light of his purpose as such.

Jesus speaks and acts so

- to introduce us into the mystery of God
- to be in personal relationship with us

And so our lives are “hidden with Christ in God”.

If this is our deepest reality, then we have, amongst other things,

a very particular perspective on possessions,

as all of the readings today, in their convergence, help us to grasp and to refine.

What is the perspective?

That possessions (both interior and exterior) have value, but are very relative.

This perspective is beyond the question of greed (which can be an issue).

This is not primarily a question of morality; this is a question of love.

We are in a relationship

- in the light of which
- in comparison with which
any and all possessions pale.

To the degree we have Christ, because Christ has us, we are rich.

We may be struggling

- to make ends meet
- to prevent a loved one from hurting him/herself
- to see clearly in dense emotional fog
- to keep our hearts from breaking

but if we have Christ (and we do, because he has us, and will not let go),

in the midst of such forms of poverty, we are rich.

In a sense, in him (whose intangible riches are endless) we have all things.

This is what it means to reign in Christ.

God bestows the riches of his love, whereby we are interiorly free,

and can make use of all good things with gratitude, for the sake of love.