

18th Sunday: “For one’s life does not consist in his possessions”.

All three readings of today speak of a perennial spiritual truth: The need to have a healthy detachment to all worldly possessions. This has nothing to do with ‘hatred of this world’.

1st Reading: Ecclesiastes / Vanity of vanities; everything under the sun, all is vanity. Vanity-(Hebrew)*Hebel* means Bubble. Power, sensual pleasures, wealth, economic advantages: they all come and go, like the bubble.

While visiting retirement homes and the elderly, I have heard some elderly people telling: “Father, I have worked all my life, putting my heart and soul into my business, making it grow and produce well. And now I realize that how ungrateful are my children, even after I have passed it all to them”.

Well, what should one do? Won’t you realize that even the most durable goods like home, property, real estate, they are all finally Bubbles; that they come and go, and that you can never hold on to them forever? Should this make you sad or depressed? No, not absolutely. The right attitude is to enjoy the good you have, *but not to cling to them obsessively*. Appreciate the good you have, enjoy it thanking the Lord for it, then let them go: don’t cling to them as if your life depends upon them.

Gospel story starts with the question: “tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me”. We often here such queries in pastoral context. In most offices of lawyers, there are bulks of cases of litigation upon dividing family assets between siblings, all over world. Sharing of assets have divided and destroyed families, even families with strong bonds, torn apart. This was true in Jesus times too. Jesus makes the best use, to teach a great lesson; “*Take care to guard against all kinds of greed, for one’s life does not consist in his possessions*”, worth bookmarking! Means, not to make your possessions, *the basis of your life*; that should not be what you live for.

Often, most humans tend to hang on to them desperately, as if they will stay forever. Hold them by your fingertips, and not grab them with the palm of your hand. Or they can easily steal your heart away!

The rich foolish man, in today's gospel, is the symbol of the obsessive, preoccupying reality of greed. His bigger barn symbolizes addiction to possessions and extreme selfishness. (I want more and more and more). The unexpected blessing made him more selfish, and not grateful. He lost the sensibility that the abundance of grain he obtained was supposed to be shared with those around him, especially those in need.

He never had a thought about the poor. His selfishness is revealed in his soliloquy: I will re-build my barn; keep all my grain; I will say to myself! In his dream about his future, there is place only for sensual pleasures: *eating, drinking, making merry!* There is no place, neither for God nor neighbor, or for spiritual life. In this story, there is only the rich man, his wealth and his plans. There is no one else even in his thoughts. He can easily be called a 'practical atheist'. Because, the end of selfishness is atheism. And Bible calls them fools, atheists and those who fails to share the God-given blessings with their neighbor.

God reminds the foolish rich, who "hoarded for many long years", the 'tragedy of this night'. All Selfish dreams and plans can stay, only up to the moment when God unexpectedly intervenes. *Whose will be these?* God will ask you and me, "what was your life all about?" It could be: bcs, no one knows the day, the hour. What are you going to show to him?

Friends, Jesus is reminding us that God's judgement is against the triumphalism of material wealth and its pre-potency. Ultimately, the life-style of not believing in God and living as if God does not exist, as seen in the life of the foolish rich, is the greatest tragedy of our time! Today, we are invited to be on guard against such temptation of greed and selfishness.

[A boy was watching a pastor, write his sermon. "How do you know what to say?" the boy asked. "Why, God tells me." Replied the pastor! "Oh, then why do you keep crossing things out?"]