

**1 August 2010**  
**18th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**The Word**

**The only treasure that matters**

**Lk 12:13-21**

The man who questions him and the people in the crowd must have been shocked by the parable Jesus tells in today's Gospel. In the Palestine of Jesus' time to have wealth was seen as a sign of God's favour, yet in the story Jesus is warning people against avarice, the desire to accumulate wealth.

It seemed like things couldn't be going better for the rich man in the story. He had had a bumper harvest, so large in fact that he didn't have enough room in his barns in which to store it all. So he decides to tear down his barns and build even bigger ones.

Now he tells himself he can relax. He has plenty of good things for years to come. He can begin to enjoy the fruits of his labour; he can start to take things easy; to eat, drink, and have a good time.

It seems like the natural thing to do. Who among Jesus' listeners would not have wanted something similar for themselves? It would be like a dream come true: to have enough riches so as not to have to work another day of their lives. To have enough good things that they could begin to really enjoy life and all it has to offer.

But, as Jesus tells it, the dream becomes a nightmare for the rich man. No sooner has he erected his new barns, and begun to smile to himself as he contemplates the future, than God tells him that he will die that very night. And what good will his riches do him then? Whose will they be?

Then Jesus hammers home the point. What is important, he says, is not material wealth or storing up goods for yourself here on earth, what is important, the only thing that is important, is becoming rich in the sight of God. For the follower of Jesus, spiritual wealth is the only kind of treasure that counts.

**Reflect**

The parable Jesus tells in today's Gospel might have been shocking to his listeners, but it is no less shocking for us today. After all, the society and world we live in tell us that life is about money and material things and having as much of these as possible.

How do we define success in our world today? What criteria do we commonly use? To be successful is to make it onto the Sunday Times Rich List, it's to own or to have invested in property in the right places, it's to feature regularly in the gossip columns and magazines that follow the lives of the rich and famous.

And if we don't meet this definition of success, if we're not rich, we can at least and dream about it and work for it. We can buy lottery tickets in the hope we will strike it

lucky; we can gamble on the horses or in Vegas; we can work 24/7 to try and build up our business; we can play the stock exchange in the hope that we will win big. All of which can be okay so long as we do not forget the point that Jesus makes in today's Gospel. There is only one prize worth going for, one treasure we must seek above all else - and that is to love God and to do God's will. If we do that, when we do that, then we will be rich indeed. Then we will have the best kind of treasure.

**Say**

“Lord, help me to work for the treasure that truly counts; do not let anything distract me from putting you first.”

**Learn**

- \* The Christian puts God first in everything.
- \* Greed and avarice are contrary to the Gospel.

**Pray**

In your prayer during this Mass and during this week, ask the Lord to strengthen your faith so that you will see it as the greatest of all treasures.

**Do**

Take some time to think about your values and priorities. What place does money have in your life?