

## Sunday homily (July 31,2016) on Lk 12:13-21

One day the father of a very wealthy family took his son on a trip to the country with the firm purpose of showing him just how poor people can be. They spent a couple of days and nights on the farm of what could be considered a very poor family.

On their return from the trip, the father asked his son, "How was the trip?"

"It was great, dad," the son replied.

"Did you see how poor people can be?" asked the father again.

"Oh yeah!" said the son.

"So what did you learn from the trip?" the father inquired.

The son answered, "**I saw that we have one dog, and they have four.** We have a pool that reaches to the middle of our garden, and they have a creek that has no end. We have imported lanterns in our garden, and they have stars at night. Our patio reaches to the front yard, and they have the whole horizon. We have a small piece of land to live on, and they have fields that go beyond our sight. We have servants who serve us, but they serve others. We have walls around our property to protect us, but they have friends to protect them."

With this, the boy's father was speechless. Then his son added, "Thanks, dad, for showing me how poor we are!"

A man who shows his wealth is like a beggar, who actually shows his poverty; they are both looking for alms – the rich man for the alms of others' envy, the poor man for the alms of others' guilt.

Today is the 18<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary time. **All the three Scripture Readings of today are well connected in theme and fit together like three panels of a colorful mural called "Set your mind on things that are above, not on things that are on earth."** In other words, they warn us of the need to place our hope in the things of heaven, not on the passing things of this world. **That is to say that we have to 'rise above materialism' and to strive for what is spiritual and divine.**

A few years ago an African missionary in Kenya described how some Africans still follow the practice of removing the clothes from their dead before burying them. One of the purposes of this practice is to dramatize that we leave the world the same way we came into it.

This is the point Jesus makes in his parable of the foolish farmer. He tells us that what counts when we die is not the wealth we acquired during life, but the person we became in the process of living.

Jesus is saying that our priority in life should be on becoming a person, not on acquiring wealth. Concretely, we violate the priority Jesus speaks about when we acquire wealth at the expense of becoming dishonest, when we acquire power at the expense of becoming ruthless, when we acquire a reputation in the community at the expense of neglecting our own family.

In short, we violate the priority Jesus speaks of when we acquire passing treasures in this life at the expense of losing eternal treasures in the life to come. Today's readings invite us to review the priorities in life.

Think of it this way. If someone asked your son, "What's your dad's number one priority in life?" what would your son say? Would he say, "**That's easy. Dad's number one priority is his family!**" Or would he say, "**Dad's number one priority is his business!**"

Or if someone asked your daughter, "What is your mother's number one priority?" what would she say? Would she say, "**That's easy. Mother's priority is her family!**" Or would she say, "I'm not sure what my mother's priority is, but it's certainly not her family!"

Or, if someone asked your father what your priority in life was, what would your father say? Would he answer as one father did, saying, "I hate to admit it, but my son's priority is himself. He isn't interested in anything unless there's something in it for him."

One morning, years ago, Albert Nobel opened his newspaper and read his own obituary. A French reporter had carelessly reported Alfred's death in place of his brother's.

Alfred was shocked.

For the first time in his life, he saw himself as others saw him. He saw himself as the "dynamite king" who had spent his life making instruments of death and destruction. That morning Alfred Nobel resolved to change his image. His resolution resulted in the annual Nobel prizes in physics, chemistry, medicine, literature, and peace.

**Today's gospel invites us to do what Alfred Nobel did. It invites us—in our imaginations— to read our own obituary. It invites us to see ourselves as others see us. It invites us to see ourselves as we really are. It invites us to see ourselves as God sees us. Or, to put it in terms of the parable in today's gospel, if we were to appear before God tonight to give an account of our life, would God have to say to us at this moment what he said to the farmer: "You fool, this night your life will be demanded of you; and the things you have prepared, to whom will they belong?"**

Let's close with a prayer:

Lord, you said to your disciples,

"What profit is there for one to gain the whole world yet lose or forfeit himself?" Luke 9:25  
Help us take these words to heart. Help us see ourselves as we really are. Above all, help us see that what counts when we lie down in death is not the wealth we acquired during life, but the person we became in the process of living.