

AUGUST 1 2010 HOLY COMMUNION

YOU ARE NOT WHAT YOU HAVE

LUKE 12:13-21

MOST SERMONS ON THIS PASSAGE GO LIKE THIS: “YOU CAN’T TAKE IT WITH YOU, SO BE GENEROUS WITH YOUR ASSETS...ESPECIALLY TOWARD THE CHURCH”(FROM *Feasting on the Word*, Yr C, Vol 3, p311) SUCH MESSAGES TRY TO SIDESTEP THE CRUCIAL ISSUE BEFORE US. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE “RICH TOWARD GOD”?

WE HAVE TO BEGIN BY GIVING UP ON OUR PRETENDING. WE ARE ALL ANXIOUS ABOUT MONEY AND POSSESSIONS. I AM, YOU ARE, THE WHOLE WORLD IS CONCERNED, BECAUSE WE DEPEND ON IT TO GET THE SECURITY OF HAVING THE THINGS WE NEED. WE MISUNDERSTAND WHEN WE THINK JESUS IS SAYING DON’T SAVE ANYTHING. THERE ARE INSTANCES IN THE BIBLE WHEN ISRAEL IS ENCOURAGED TO STORE GOODS, FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN JOSEPH PROPHECIZED A FAMINE. SO IT IS NOT ABOUT SIMPLY A STORAGE ISSUE.

THE DISCOMFORT WE FEEL WHEN JESUS SPEAKS SUCH TEACHINGS, WHICH MOST OF US PREFER TO IGNORE, STEMS FROM ATTACHING THE MEANING AND PURPOSE OF OUR LIVES TO WHAT WE OWN. FROM THE OUTSET, WE NEED TO BE REMINDED, WE SPEND A LOT OF OUR LIVES FILLED WITH ANXIETY, FEARING THAT WE WILL LOSE WHAT WE HAVE. THE IRONY IS THAT WE WILL LOSE IT ALL AT DEATH. SO WHATEVER VALUE WE HAVE PLACED ON OUR MATERIAL POSSESSIONS AS THE SCORECARD OF WHETHER OUR LIVES HAVE BEEN A SUCCESS OR NOT, IN THE END WILL NOT HELP US, ESPECIALLY THOSE OF US WHO BELIEVE WE WILL BE WITH GOD AFTER WE ARE DONE HERE.

OF COURSE, JESUS BELIEVED THAT INNER PEACE AND DEEP SATISFACTION WITH THE DIRECTION OF OUR LIVES CAN NEVER BE ATTAINED THROUGH OUR POSSESSIONS. WE SEE IT IN OUR LIVES MORE TODAY THAN EVER. OUR POSSESSIONS BRING US FLEETING HAPPINESS. IF IT WERE NOT SO WHY WOULD OUR EGOES ALWAYS CRAVE MORE. ALWAYS WANTING MORE BETRAYS THAT WE ARE SELDOM SATISFIED. SO WE ENTER A CIRCLE THAT CAN LEAD TO DEPRESSION OR GREED. SOMEONE ONCE SAID, “DON’T PRAY TO GET EVERYTHING YOU WANT, WHERE WOULD YOU PUT

IT??" I WOULD ADD, WHERE WOULD YOU FIND THE TIME TO CARE FOR IT ALL.

MOST OFTEN, WHAT WE HAVE DISTRACTS US FROM SEEKING GOD WITHIN. WE QUICKLY STATE WE ARE ALWAYS BUSY, BUT SELDOM ASK "DOING WHAT AND WHY?" THERE IS NEVER A "HAPPILY EVER AFTER" WITH THE THINGS OF THIS WORLD. IF THERE WAS WE WOULD KNOW WHAT ENOUGH WAS. AS WE SEE FROM THE QUESTION JESUS IS ASKED ABOUT INHERITANCE, POSSESSIONS CAN POLLUTE FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS AND FRIENDSHIPS. WE KNOW ALL THIS, YET WHY DO WE REMAIN MORE FAITHFUL TO THE MATERIAL WORLD THAN THE INNER, INVISIBLE THINGS OF GOD?"

WE ARE NOT WHAT WE HAVE. WE ARE MUCH MORE THAN THAT. WE HAVE BEEN MADE IN THE IMAGE OF GOD. THAT MEANS THERE IS SOMETHING BEYOND ALL THIS, THAT IS MORE ESSENTIAL TO POSSESS---IT IS THE CHRIST WITHIN US, THE IMAGE OF GOD THAT IS WITHIN EVERY PERSON.

WHEN THE POSSESSIONS OF THIS WORLD ARE NOT SHOWING US LOVING WAYS TO RELATE BUT ARE ACTUALLY GETTING IN THE WAY OF LOVE; WHEN WE ARE EXPECTING TO HAVE DEEP JOY OUT OF THE THINGS WE BUY BUT, IN THE LONG RUN, IT IS NOT FORTHCOMING; WHEN WE PLANT THE WHOLE MEANING OF WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE WERE MEANT TO BE AND DO ON THIS EARTH IN DEEP INTO WHAT WE OWN, BUT FIND EMPTINESS THERE, WHERE DO WE GO? WE ARE NOT WHAT WE HAVE; WE ARE WHO WE ARE BECAUSE GOD HAS MADE US AND GIVEN US LIFE. JESUS IS THE WAY TO THIS DEEP SENSE OF GOD AND LIFE.

I CAN TELL YOU STORY AFTER STORY OF MEN AND WOMEN WHO HAVE HAD GREAT ACHIEVEMENT AND GREAT WEALTH, BUT DID NOT FIND INNER SATISFACTION UNTIL THEY FOUND JESUS CHRIST AND REDIRECTED THEIR LIVES TO SERVE HIM. THERE THEY FOUND THEIR CENTER AND THEIR PEACE. THERE THEY FOUND THE INNER CALM WHERE THERE WAS LESS ANXIETY ABOUT THE TRANSIENCE OF THE POSSESSIONS OF THIS WORLD.

YEARS AGO, A REPORTER WAS INTERVIEWING A MAN WHOSE HOUSE AND ALL HIS POSSESSIONS WERE JUST TOTALLY DESTROYED BY ONE OF THOSE CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES. AS REPORTERS WILL DO, HE TRIED TO SOLICIT THE EMOTION OF LOSS FROM THE MAN. HOWEVER, THE REPORTER BECAME SPEECHLESS WHEN HE THE MAN TOLD ABOUT HOW HIS BROTHER

MUSED THAT THEY SHOULD BE CAREFUL AND NOT ALLOW THEIR POSSESSIONS TO POSSESS THEM. THIS MAN WHO HAD LOST EVERYTHING ANNOUNCED TO THE REPORTER WITH A NOTE OF UNEXPECTED TRIUMPH: "I AM A FREE MAN NOW!" (*The New Interpreter's Bible*, Vol IX, p 257) Amen.