

Eighteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time | Luke 12:13-21

August 4, 2019 | Deacon Williams

The movie *Finding Nemo* came out a few years ago now, but today's gospel still reminds me of a scene from that movie. Maybe you remember it. It's where a bunch of hungry seagulls spot some food, and they're all yelling, 'mine, mine, mine!'

Well, the rich man that Jesus talks about is a lot like those seagulls. Can't you just see Him? – there is so much here and it's all mine! Now, be careful before you go judging his selfishness. We all have a selfish side and we've probably all acted like him at some point in our lives. And not necessarily when we were small children. In fact, if there is anyone here who doesn't have that selfish streak, then you may be ready for sainthood! Congratulations!

How do we view our possessions? Are we selfish about them to the point that everything we do is geared toward having more stuff? We heard how the writer of Ecclesiastes views this topic. He talks about how our days are filled with sorrow and grief and that sometimes we don't sleep well because our minds are still racing because we are so concerned with our daily activities. And those activities are, more often than not, connected to our possessions. Ecclesiastes is saying that living with that much vanity is a sad way to live.

So, do we let our possessions control us – do we let them rule us and become our God in the process? That's what the rich man was doing when he built his bigger barns.

Today's gospel repeats a basic truth. God wants us to think of others first. Then, in turn, He will take care of us. God wants us to depend on Him, not on our possessions, our family, our friends, or our portfolio. I think, perhaps, that things would have been different for the rich man if he had built his barns because he wanted to be able to share with his community – to make sure people would be fed when times got rough. So, what it all boils down to is the man's attitude about his possessions. The man in the parable has a selfish attitude. So, what is our attitude about our possessions? Do they control our

thoughts and actions? Do our possessions actually harm our relationship with God?

You see, spiritually the healthiest place we can be is to realize that to truly take care of ourselves, we need to become dependent on God.

Entering into the relationship that God wants with us requires us not to build bigger barns, but to realize that bigger houses, better and more degrees, savings accounts, retirement plans and portfolios won't truly take care of us. We need to understand that these things do have the potential to become replacements for the One, true God.

It is not that we can't have these things, because I believe God will give us all we truly need and He often gives us more than we can imagine. But we should be able to see that if WE work hard for things, we can become dependent on ourselves for our needs. Then you can start to see yourself taking God's place.

Again, it isn't that you can't have nice things. But if you do, do they become the things that control your life? If anyone here has ever gone through the process of simplifying your home, you may be able to relate to this. Maybe you needed to go through things because you were moving, or maybe you just did a really major spring cleaning. Well, when you did that, did you have the experience of feeling lighter and less burdened? If you did, there is a good reason for that. You see, when we accumulate more stuff, there is more responsibility to take care of all of that stuff. Whether it's having to pay for repairs when things break, or just trying to keep things clean and organized, having more stuff means we spend more time taking care of it. That means we have less time for family, and for God. Those are the things that are really important in life. So, when we have too much stuff, we actually have less time for the things that satisfy our souls.

Another way that having too many possessions can affect us is that we have very little left over to help those in need. So, if our possessions control how much we can do for our neighbor and those in need, then our possessions have become our dependence and our god. If your house payments are so big you can't do for others, or even support your parish, then your house controls your life instead of God. If your car payment is so big there is nothing to give the poor—it

controls your life—it becomes your bigger barn. God calls us to be good stewards of everything He has given us, including our money.

Have you ever thought about tithing? If you tend to dismiss this idea, it is a scriptural concept that at least 10 percent of our goods should go to God. Maybe you're sitting there thinking 'how can he stand there and talk to us about tithing?' Well, that is something I can challenge you about. God convicted my wife Theresa and myself to tithe a number of years ago. Was this a scary thing to do? You better believe it was! But in faith we stepped out and we've been making the effort to tithe ever since, even through job losses and career transitions when it was a real struggle. To our amazement, God has blessed that faithfulness in ways we never would have expected.

Now if you are sitting there thinking that I'm saying this because I'm a deacon and deacons are SUPPOSED to be holy and do stuff like that, you don't get off the hook that easy! We were tithing about ten years before I became a deacon. So, don't even go there! Now, it's not my intention to brag about this. That's not why I'm saying this. I just want you to understand that if we can do this, you can too!!!

Now, there is something we need to understand about God. You cannot out give God. No matter how generous we are, God will always be more generous than us. It's in His nature. God wants your dependence so he can be generous and give you more than you know what to do with. The man in the parable chose to build bigger barns when God gave him so much harvest—but he was trusting more in his barns than he did on God. He totally missed the point that we need to depend on God. That's what life is really all about.

But our world says NO to that. Our world says to be independent of each other, to take care of yourself, don't worry about others, get yourself the biggest house, the newest car, the biggest portfolio. But as Catholics, we are called to be counter cultural, and until we believe and begin to act on our beliefs, we risk becoming self-centered, self-indulgent and unhappy deep down inside, in spite of being baptized, church going Christians.

Don't we all want to live joyful lives? Well, a good way to find that joy is to follow God's call; to trust in Him completely, and then to teach & demonstrate that to our families.

OR we can make the choice to build bigger houses to store up our goods. But when we suddenly reach life's end, we will have a nagging feeling that we've wasted our lives.

What choice will we make?

Will we continue to say, mine, mine, mine? Or will we let go of the things that keep us from experiencing God in our daily lives?

What is it that we are hanging onto?