

I. Homily – 18th Sunday – Giving it all

II. Fr. Thomas Tobin relates the story of a devout priest who for years had prayed God to send him someone who would teach him the real spiritual life.

A. One day, at prayer, he heard a voice saying: “Go to such and such a church and you will have the answer to your prayers.”

- 1. He went and at the door of the church he found a beggar, barefooted and in rags. He greeted the mendicant saying: “Good day, my friend.”**
- 2. “Thank you, sir, for your kind wishes, but I do not recall ever having had a ‘bad’ day.”**
- 3. “Then God has certainly given you a very happy life.”**
- 4. “That is very true, sir. I have never been unhappy. In saying this I am not making any rash statement either. This is the reason: When I have nothing to eat, I give thanks to God; when it rains or snows, I bless God’s providence; when someone insults me, drives me away, or otherwise mistreats me, I give glory to God. I said I’ve never had an unhappy day, and it’s the truth, because I am accustomed to will unreservedly what God wills. Whatever happens to me, sweet or bitter, I gladly receive from his hands as what is best for me. Hence my unvarying happiness.”**
- 5. “Where did you find God?”**
- 6. “I found him where I left creatures.”**
- 7. “Who are you anyway?”**
- 8. “I am a king.”**
- 9. “And where is your kingdom?”**
- 10. “In my soul, where everything is in good order; where the passions obey reason, and reason obeys God.”**
- 11. “How have you come to such a state of perfection?”**

12. “By silence. I practice silence towards men, while I cultivate the habit of speaking with God. Conversing with God is the way I found and maintain my peace of soul.”

13. Union with God brought this poor beggar to the very heights of perfection. In his poverty he was richer than the mightiest monarch; in his sufferings, he was vastly happier than worldlings amid their worldly delights.

14. Now, we might say, oh that is all a nice story, but no one can really live like that. This is only for extraordinary people.

15. But, isn't this exactly the lesson of our scripture readings today? And, isn't this lesson not simply for the poor beggar in the story or the apostles, but for all of us?

B. There may be many things that we wonder about in this life.

1. We may wonder what I am going to study in college?

2. I may wonder if I will be working at the same place next year?

3. I may wonder if I am going to be able to get a job?

4. A person may wonder who they are going to marry or if they are going to marry?

5. A person may wonder if they are going to be able to pay their mortgage next month or what car they are going to buy who what they will eat tonight.

6. We wonder the answer to many questions; however, there is one sure thing in life.

7. What is it? The one thing that is for certain is that everyone in this room will one day give up everything they own and everyone they love.

a) This is not a threat nor is it a promise nor is it a prophecy. It is a simple matter of fact.

b) Many of us have already given up many things.

(1) I have given up my skinny figure that I had when I was a young man.

(2) Some have given up their hair.

(3) Others have given up their ability to remember.

(4) Now, all this sounds depressing. What we want to hear about is the hope for the future and the great things that are instore for us.

(5) You know why Joel Olsteen is so popular, because he tells us that if we believe then we will be successful in this life.

(6) He tells us that everything is going to be alright.

(7) He tells us that God will take care of us in this life and we will be happy.

(8) Isn't that what we believe too?

(9) I don't want to hear that I will give up everything in this life that I hold dear! That is not what I need!

C. The problem, of course, is that whether we want to hear it or not every person in this room has experienced or will experience this giving up...if not now in some way, then on the day we go to the next life.

1. So, the question is not whether, but when we do what will be our response?
2. Will we become angry and bitter?
3. Or will we make even that loss an act of love?
4. More, yet, will we begin striving to be so generous that our lives are focused on giving out of love for Christ?
5. Will we take the struggles of this life and recognize that they have eternal value when joined to the sufferings of Christ? Will we take up our cross and follow him, as he has asked?

D. Msgr. Charles Pope observes: "...when we pray it is generally some prayer that God make this world a better place: Please Lord, fix my finances, fix my health, get me a better job. It is not wrong to pray for this but when that is all we pray for it is almost as if we were saying to God, "Give me enough comfort, health, and resources and I'll just stay here forever." We've all been a little infected with the "prosperity gospel." But when in our prayer do we long for God and to be with him in heaven? When do we ask him to make us holy and prepare us to meet him?"

E. This sounds so much like our Lord in today's gospel doesn't it?

1. “You fool, this night your life will be demanded of you; and the things you have prepared, to whom will they belong?’ Thus will it be for all who store up treasure for themselves but are not rich in what matters to God.”

F. The problem with the prosperity gospel is that it misses the point of what the treasure is.

1. We have a hard time realizing that this world is not the treasure. The treasure is not success in this world. The treasure is not the measure here and now, but the hereafter.

2. Otherwise, if the goal is success in this world, then what is going to happen when you have to give it all up at the end of your life?

3. If I am going to pray and be faithful so that God can give me what I want or even what I need in this world, then I will be sorely disappointed when the Son of Man comes on the clouds of heaven at the end of the world.

4. When we take our leave of this world and we appear before the Glory of the Father, we will have trained ourselves over the course of our lives to say: “No. I don’t want this.” “This is boring.”

5. “Oh, but I say, when the time comes, I will choose God.”

6. As St. Alphonsus, whose feast day we celebrate on the first of August, why should you think that you would choose God at the end of your life, when you have not chosen him during your life.¹

¹ “But we must remember that, to secure a happy death, the Saints have abandoned all things; they have left their country; they have renounced the delights and the hopes which the world held out to them, and have embraced a life of poverty and contempt. But how can worldlings, living in the midst of sins, in the midst of earthly pleasures and dangerous occasions, expect a happy death ? God warns sinners that at death they shall seek and shall not find him (John vii, 34). He tells us that the hour of death shall be the time, not of mercy, but of vengeance (Deut. xxxii, 35). I will repay them in due time. Reason tells us the same; for, at death, men of the world shall find their understanding weak and darkened, and their heart hardened by the bad habits which they have contracted. Their temptations will then be more violent; how can they resist at death who were almost always accustomed to yield to temptations during life, and to be conquered by them? To change their heart a most powerful grace would be then necessary. But is God obliged to give them such a grace ? Have they merited such a grace by the scandalous and disorderly life which they have led? And on that last hour depends their happiness or misery for eternity. How is it possible that he who reflects on this, and believes the truths of faith, does not leave all to give himself to God, who will judge us all according to our works.” St. Alphonsus Liguori, Preparation for Death, Consideration II, Second Point.

7. If we have spent our lives focused on giving up our relationship with God in order to make time for all the things we want in this life, then we will choose to give up God when he is offered at the end.

8.

G. The other problem with the prosperity Gospel is that when trouble hits we immediately begin to think that God is punishing us or does not love us or worse yet, that God is not here with us.

1. The reality is that the exact opposite is true.

2. He is preparing us for the next life. He is preparing us so that when the time comes at the end of our lives to choose him or something else, it will be natural for us to choose him.

3. This is why St. Paul urges us: **“If you were raised with Christ, seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Think of what is above, not of what is on earth.”**²

H. The point here is that the way that we have lived our lives here on earth is the way that we will live them in the next life. If it is clear in every moment of our lives, that the treasure is Christ, then it will be only a small step to Him at the end of our lives.

² “Death viewed according to the senses terrifies and causes fear; but when viewed with the eyes of faith it consoles and becomes desirable. It appears terrible to sinners, but lovely and precious to the saints.” St. Alphonsus Liguori.