

CATHOLIC CONVERSATIONS ON THE SCRIPTURES

Archdiocese of Miami - Ministry of Christian Formation



August 1, 2010 18th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle C)

Gospel reading A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke 12:13-21

[To be read aloud]

Someone in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, tell my brother to share the inheritance with me.” He replied to him, “Friend, who appointed me as your judge and arbitrator?” Then he said to the crowd; “Take care to guard against all greed, for though one may be rich, one’s life does not consist of possessions.” Then he told them a parable. “There was a rich man whose land produced a bountiful harvest. He asked himself, ‘What shall I do, for I do not have space to store my harvest?’ And he said, ‘This is what I shall do: I shall tear down my barns and build larger ones. There I shall store all my grain and other goods and I shall say to myself, ‘Now as for you, you have so many good things stored up for many years, rest, eat, drink, be merry!’” But God said to him, ‘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.”

Brief commentary:

In Biblical times, rabbis were frequently asked to help settle family disputes. Thus, the question is appropriate for Jesus. Yet, he refuses to answer it and returns to the conversation that the man so rudely interrupted: his instruction on discipleship. The parable that follows is known as “the parable of the poor rich man,” a man so rich that he had no place to store his goods, and so poor that he had lost all sense of what really matters. The parable is not a condemnation of material wealth, but a call to take a hard look at the way we prioritize earthly riches and gospel values.

Luke has joined together sayings contrasting those whose focus and trust in life is on material possessions, symbolized here by the rich fool of the parable, with those who recognize their complete dependence on God, those whose radical detachment from material possessions symbolizes their heavenly treasure. Ultimately, the parable reminds us that life is a free gift and it is foolish to accumulate excessive riches as if we could guarantee that our life will be long and healthy to enjoy them.

Today’s reading offers three significant messages:

- The rich man in the parable does not seem evil. His sin is not being rich, but being unable to be generous with his riches.
- The man is looking for security in material riches. Today, it is clear that we can not rely on possessions for security. The true treasure lies in the freedom to live beyond one’s greed.
- With a certain irony, the parable reminds us that even when we think we control our lives because of our wealth, we have no control over the time of our death.

For our shared or personal reflection:

After a brief pause for silent reflection share your answers, ideas or feelings.

1. What am I doing with my “treasure”? Where does my security rest? Explain.
2. Have I ever allowed greed to spoil important relationships in my life? What happened?

Suggested readings: Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraphs 549; 2536; 2547-2548; 2551.