

18th Sunday of the Year C

First Reading Ecclesiastes 1:2; 2:21-23

Vanity of vanities, the Preacher says. Vanity of vanities. All is vanity! For so it is that a man who has laboured wisely, skilfully and successfully must leave what is his own to someone who has not toiled for it at all. This, too, is vanity and great injustice; for what does he gain for all the toil and strain that he has undergone under the sun? What of all his laborious days, his cares of office, his restless nights? This, too, is vanity.

Second Reading Colossians 3:1-5.9-11

Since you have been brought back to true life with Christ, you must look for the things that are in heaven, where Christ is, sitting at God's right hand. Let your thoughts be on heavenly things, not on the things that are on the earth, because you have died, and now the life you have is hidden with Christ in God. But when Christ is revealed – and he is your life – you too will be revealed in all your glory with him. That is why you must kill everything in you that belongs only to the earthly life; fornication, impurity, guilty passion, evil desires and especially greed, which is the same thing as worshipping a false god; and never tell each other lies. You have stripped off your old behaviour with your old self, and you have put on a new self which will progress towards true knowledge the more it is renewed in the image of its creator; and in that image there is no room for distinction between Greek and Jew, between the circumcised or the uncircumcised, or between barbarian and Scythian, slave and free man. There is only Christ: he is everything and he is in everything.

Gospel Luke 12:13-21

A man in the crowd said to Jesus, "Master, tell my brother to give me a share of our inheritance." "My friend," he replied "who appointed me your judge, or the arbitrator of your claims?"

Then he said to them, "Watch, and be on your guard against avarice of any kind, for a man's life is not made secure by what he owns, even when he has more than he needs."

Then he told them a parable: "There was once a rich man who, having had a good harvest from his land, thought to himself, 'What am I to do? I have not enough room to store my crops.'

Then he said, 'This is what I will do: I will pull down my barns and build bigger ones, and store all my grain and my goods in them, and I will say to my soul: My soul, you have plenty of good things laid by for many years to come; take things easy, eat, drink, have a good time.' But God said to him, 'Fool! This very night the demand will be made for your soul; and this hoard of yours, whose will it be then?' So it is when a man stores up treasure for himself in place of making himself rich in the sight of God."

Meditation

Quarrels over inheritance can provoke bitterness and enmity in the closest of families. Jesus refuses to take sides on behalf of particular interests. He goes even farther, for he shows what is really at the root of the quarrel: the greed for gain, the love of money. Jesus poses the true question: what is it that assures life? In answer he recounts the short-sightedness of the rich farmer. This man thinks he will assure his life with abundant reserves accumulated in grain bins. But death suddenly snatches him away. Jesus denounces this lack of foresight. By limiting his ambitions to this world, the rich man forfeited his chance for true life. We are fools if we believe that what is essential here below is to accumulate and to produce, if we identify the good life with a solid, reassuring bank account. "To be rich in the sight of God", is to give and to share, to seek life where life is to be found.