

Homily for the 18th Sunday in Ordinary Time
St. Thomas the Apostle Church – West Springfield, Massachusetts
August 4, 2019



Scripture Readings: [Ecclesiastes 1:2; 2:21-23](#) ✕ [Psalm 90:3-6, 12-14, 17](#) ✕ [Colossians 3:1-5, 9-11](#) ✕ [Luke 12:13-21](#)

A story is told about three brothers, who, after years of hard work and leading busy lives, wanted to make their 83-year-old mother happy, especially on Christmas Day. They were concerned about her health and safety as she was beginning to lose her eyesight.

The mother lived in a small apartment in the city and the first son decided that he would buy his mother a huge house in the country where he thought she would be safe and that she would enjoy the quiet of the countryside.

The second son, knowing that his mother who, with her eyesight failing, could no longer drive and would need to be able to travel, bought a limousine and hired a chauffeur.

The youngest son, knowing that his mother was very religious and loved to read the Bible gave her an expensive parrot that could recite the entire Bible. This, he thought, would be very meaningful for her as she was able to read very little because of her failing eyesight.

Several days after Christmas, they each received a thank you note from their mother. To the first one she wrote: "Thank you for the house, but it is so big I can't clean it by myself. I miss all of my friends in the city and I was always able to get around the city by myself, so I'm moving back to my apartment. Please feel free to sell the house."

To the second one, she wrote: "The car is beautiful but, now that I am moving back to the city, I have no use for it or for the chauffeur. Please sell the car and help the chauffeur to find another job."

To the youngest, who gave her the expensive parrot that could recite the Bible, she wrote: "You know me well and you know my needs are simple. You gave me the best gift of all. The chicken was delicious!"

While the youngest son makes a pretty good attempt to give his mother something she

may truly need, the other two sons seem to pay too much attention to the size and price tags of their gifts, rather than on what their mother truly needs: a strong and loving relationship with her family.

Our Scripture readings today may seem to be against wealth, but they're really challenging us to use our wealth wisely and for the good of others. God doesn't have a problem with our being successful. The psalmist of old often prayed that God would "prosper the work of our hands."¹

What God really wants us to do is to use our wealth, the gifts that we have, the prosperous work of our hands, and to do something positive with them for the good of others.

We live in a society where many people are overflowing with possessions and schedules; where many are overwhelmed both with pursuing more and building new "barns" in their lives to store more in. To be people of faith, to be real disciples of the Gospel Jesus, begins with emptying ourselves of our stuff to create the place for God to dwell and fill. All three of today's readings warn of the futility of the vain pursuit of wealth and celebrity.

The most tragic kind of poverty is the emptiness of a life filled with things but possessing nothing of God. Christ calls us to "think of what is above, not of what is on earth"² — love, forgiveness, compassion, mercy, gratitude. God has given us this precious, wonderful life in order to embrace and be embraced by His selfless and affirming love, to discover how to love one another as God loves us.

Let us pray that we may use our earthly wealth and treasures to do things that will help us in our quest to move closer to the real and everlasting treasure of heaven. ✕

¹ [Psalm 90:17](#)

² [Colossians 3:2](#)