

Sermon Eccl 5 10 20

Sermon: 21st Sunday after Pentecost SB

Text: Ecclesiastes 5:10-20 (v.15, 19)

Theme: Are you aware that your life is eternal?

Goal: To create awareness on the finitude of our earthly life and of the eternity of our spiritual life.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: The Parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:16-21) is a good introduction to our text:

“And he (Jesus) told them this parable: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’”

“Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. And I’ll say to myself, “You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.””

“But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’”

“This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.”

I – Finite goals – without Christ

The temptation of wealth is so big that Jesus says in our Gospel:

“How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God” (Mark 10:23). We discussed the question at our Bible Study last Wednesday ‘what does it mean to be rich?’ It is not a matter of how much you have, but how you manage what you have. Do you manage it thinking only about your profits, to preserve what is yours in a selfish way? Even a poor one can be greedy.

As we look around us we will always find someone who has more than us and others who have less, much less than us. We are poor in the eyes of the very rich; but we are rich in the eyes of the very poor.

For someone who puts as a goal for his/her life to become rich, he/she will never be satisfied. Our text says: “Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is vanity.” Money in itself is not bad and we need it. But, as St. Paul writes to Timothy (6:10): “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”

Why is the love of money vanity? Because our life is short and there is an eternity waiting for us. “Naked a man comes from his mother’s womb, and as he comes, so he departs. He takes nothing from his labour that he can carry in his hands.” Every friend who pass away, every Memorial Service reminds us of this... but it seems that we never learn it. Our heart clings to what we have... This is especially true for people who don’t trust God, who are far from Christ. They do whatever is possible or impossible to accumulate more and more, without thinking about their eternity. But this is also a temptation for every Christian.

A Commentary wrote: Materialism has infected even those who do not explicitly reject religion. It has affected Christians (around the world)..., leaving many Christians lukewarm or indifferent to their faith. People’s lives are dominated by their desire for worldly pleasures and bodily comforts, and revolve around money, possessions and the things of the world rather than spiritual values. This is an inevitable consequence of the failure to love God above all else. Jesus warned us: “What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?” (Luke 9:25). People who rely only on possessions and on human philosophical, scientific or material interpretation of things have made human reason their god. Such reliance can lead only to ruin and damnation. (ABC 791).

We need to be aware that our earthly life is short, very short. But our eternal life is endless! We need to manage with responsibility what God gives us, if we have lots or if we have less, remembering that we are stewards of God and once we will be accountable for our life and for what God gives us.

II – Infinite goals – with Christ!

Our eyes have to look further than our bank account or our retirement. The resurrection and ascension of Jesus open to us a new perspective of life: There is an eternal life in God's plan waiting for us in His Kingdom! This faith reality gives a new dimension to our plans and decisions. We live and enjoy the life in the awareness that we are just in transit. What impact does our life bring about where we pass through? Does it make some difference in the life of people around us? As I will always highlight who are the people around us: first of all our family; then our neighbours and schoolmates or colleagues; our church family... Are our suitcases so heavy that we cannot go forward in our journey anymore? It's time to begin to share what we have accumulated so that we can walk easily the way to heaven. Remember: We will take nothing with us at our departure. It's time to share.

The life of a Christian doesn't need to be a poor one, full of privations. Jesus didn't have anything during His earthly life. Even so, He never despised an invitation for a good meal with a glass of wine at the houses of His friends and even at the houses of some Pharisees. He even promised to His disciples in our Gospel (Mark 10:29-31) that they would have many houses to host them and an extended family to take care of them while they were traveling through the world to spread the Gospel. Persecution would be around the corner as well to remind them that life depends not only on eating and drinking, but also on doing God's will and on following the way of Jesus: Through the cross to eternal life. Their eyes were always focused on the life to come.

While we are here connected to Christ by true faith and true love to Him and to our neighbour, we can enjoy the life God gives us. Our text from Ecclesiastes *is not condemning wealth in itself, for it, too, is a gift of God. But what is important for a contented life is an acceptance of the style of life God apportions, and awareness of God-given nature of all wealth... a man must be in control of his attitude to wealth rather than his attitude to wealth in control of him.*" (ABC 791).

Let us listen to the text again: “This is what I have observed to be good: that it is appropriate for a person to eat, to drink and to find satisfaction in their toilsome labour under the sun during the few days of life God has given them—for this is their lot. Moreover, when God gives someone wealth and possessions, and the ability to enjoy them, to accept their lot and be happy in their toil—this is a gift of God. They seldom reflect on the days of their life, because God keeps them occupied with gladness of heart.”

Conclusion: As we are finishing the eight “Biblical Stewardship Principles” today, I hope that your awareness about what it means to be God’s steward has grown a lot. The 8th Biblical Stewardship Principle says: *Gods stewards live intentionally in the light of the Lord’s eternal purpose while being firmly committed to the here and now.* We will talk about stewardship on 11th November again; and on 22nd November we will do a revision on all of this, opening for discussions and proposals at a Brainstorming Meeting after the service, trying to improve stewardship in our congregation, sharing more our gifts with each other for the good of all and of God’s kingdom, and involving more people as volunteers to do what is necessary to do, good willing and with gladness as it is God’s will. St. Thomas has a good potential to grow and to do more than we are doing. It depends on each of us doing his part under God’s blessing.

When you have to take decisions in your personal life and in matters related to the church, remember first of all that God loves you and He gave His Son Jesus to bring you very close to God, forgiving your sins and accepting you as His beloved child. Remember also that whatever we have is just temporary and we are managers of it. Love God with your whole heart and your neighbour as yourself. Many good changes will happen in your life and in the life of our church; not driven by our selfish nature, but driven by God’s love and guidance and by faith in Jesus. Amen.