

18th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME; Cycle – C; July 31st 2022
Ecclesiastes 1: 2, 2: 21-23; Colossians 3: 1-5, 9-11; Luke 12: 13-21

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

Mahatma Gandhi says on greed, “*Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's needs, but not every man's greed.*” The evil of greed can be traced back to Adam and Eve. God had created everything for them in the Garden of Eden. But their greed to become like God caused the loss of the Paradise. Many kingdoms and emperors fell due to greed. History will never forget the greed of Emperors like Alexander the great and Napoleon whose greed dug their own graves.

Both the Book of Ecclesiastes and the gospel of today speak about the futility of greed. The author of Ecclesiastes writes about the folly of accumulating things on earth, which the person may not be able to use fully; the Book says: “**Here is one who has labored with wisdom and knowledge and skill, and yet to another who has not labored over it, he must leave property.**” In other words, empty handed we came and empty handed we go back, leaving everything behind for someone else. Jesus got a little annoyed with the young man who wanted him to be the arbitrator between his brother and him to split the inheritance. Even after listening to Jesus’ preaching still the man was only concerned about the material things. So this gave Jesus the opportunity to tell the parable of *the rich farmer*. We should not be under the impression that the farmer earned his goods unjustly or illegally. What he had was the sweat of his brow. So, naturally, he had every right to enjoy what he had. But still Jesus calls him a fool.

Let us see then what went wrong with the farmer. First of all the farmer was so self-centered and he could not see anything or anybody beyond his very self. In this parable we find the use of *the personal pronoun ‘I’ six times and ‘my or mine’ four times*. This is the clear evidence of his self-centeredness. When this man had the superfluity of goods, he was planning to make a larger barn, instead of distributing the excess produce among the poor. Even long before the birth of Jesus the **Rabbis considered, prayer, fasting and alms giving as the cardinal virtues to be practiced by everyone**. But the rich farmer found joy in hoarding and consuming everything by himself. The more he had the greedier he became. *The Romans had a proverb which said, “Money is like the salty sea water; the more you drink the thirstier you become.”* Secondly, he never saw a life beyond this world. All his plans were based on the life here on earth. He never thought that there would be a time coming when he had to leave all these things behind and go

empty handed. Unfortunately the moment he started his merry making he lost his life.

Jesus is not against riches or rich people. Indeed, he had rich friends like Zacchaeus, the tax collector, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. A few rich women supported him materially. He does not say that we should be deprived of material comforts and wealth. Jesus speaks only against the selfish use of wealth for one's own personal pleasure alone. When Zacchaeus declared that he would give half of his possessions to the poor, Jesus said, **"Today salvation has come to this house."** Recently I read that Bill Gates, the founder of Microsoft is going to set apart his entire wealth for charitable work. It is said that Oprah Winfrey spends 50 million dollars a year for charity which is 1/3 of her annual income. Alfred Nobel, the inventor of Dynamite, spent most of his wealth to establish the coveted Nobel Prize in the world. These are some of the wealthy people who were not overcome by greed, rather knew how to make use of their God given wealth for good causes. So we should not conclude that just because one is rich he/she will be greedy and at the same time one who is poor is not greedy.

It is said that greed is born with man and it dies one hour after his death. Like the rich farmer, the greedy people will never like to share their goods with anyone and at the same time they are also not satisfied with what they have. **They are always worried about what they don't have and trying restlessly to accumulate it.** When we share a portion of even the little we have, the joy of it will be amazing. *The wealth, time and talents are the gifts God has given us and by sharing them with the needy we deposit treasures in heaven.* To share our gifts with someone, it is not necessary that we should be rich as Bill Gates or Oprah. If Oprah can donate 50 million dollars, you may be able to give \$50 and both are equal before God. *Friends, in order to be happy in our life, we don't need so much money and so many things; rather we should be content with what we have and what we are and share our goods with others.* Gautama Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, who lived more than 400 years before Jesus, said, *"The greed for materials things is the cause of all miseries in this world."* Jesus says in Mt 6:19, **"But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal."** Every charitable act we do will become a treasure in heaven for us.