

Sunday, September 18, 2016

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading: Amos 8:4-7

2nd Reading: 1 Timothy 2:1-8

Responsorial: Psalm 113:1-2, 4-8

Gospel: Luke 16:1-13

Being Generous Stewards of God's Gifts and Graces

No servant can serve two masters. (Luke 16:13)

Have you heard about the dying man who won the lottery? Concerned that the excitement would be too much for him, the man's family asked their parish priest to tell him the good news. When the pastor told the man that he had won \$10 million, the man replied, "I want to give half of it to the Church." The priest was so surprised that he had a heart attack. This little joke tells us how much of an impact money can have on us.

Today's Gospel asks us, "What is your attitude toward money?" Here are a few ideas that might help you answer that question.

First, having money is not a sin. It's our love of money that separates us from God. Jesus wants to be first in our lives—above our money and possessions.

Second, Jesus asks us to be good stewards of our money. He wants us to be prudent, honest, and responsible. We should never allow greed or dishonesty to dominate us. Instead, we should use our money wisely, invest it wisely, and be as generous as we can.

Third, donating to the Church and other charities, even if we can give only a small amount, is a key aspect of our stewardship. Scripture calls us to hear "the cry of the poor" (Proverbs 21:13). We can be assured that whenever we give away our earthly treasures, God will reward us with heavenly treasures—"eternal dwellings" (Luke 16:9).

Finally, remember that your money is not yours; it belongs to God. The moment you die, you will no longer own your money. Yes, you can give it to your children or to charity. However, money will be absolutely useless to you. The only way it will matter is the degree to which you have used it to help people: your family, your friends, the Church, and the poor.

Money is a very complex and emotional topic, so ask the Holy Spirit to help you learn how to keep it in the right perspective.

"Jesus, teach me to be a good steward."

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Questions for Reflection or Discussion :

1. The first reading begins with a strong warning to those who “trample upon the needy and destroy the poor of the land” and ends with these words from the Lord, “Never will I forget a thing they have done!”
 - In what ways can we “trample” and “destroy” the poor, when we simply ignore their plight, rather than generously giving of our time, talent, and treasure.
2. In the responsorial psalm, we hear again how our God “raises up the lowly” and “lifts up the poor.”
 - In light of the first reading and the responsorial psalm, what additional action(s) do you feel the Lord may be calling you to in order to better serve those less fortunate?
3. In the second reading, St. Paul strongly encourages us to offer “supplications, prayers, petitions, and thanksgivings be offered for everyone,” including “all in authority, that we may lead a quiet and tranquil life in all devotion and dignity.” He goes on to say that “This is good and pleasing to God our savior.” It is easy to get caught up in “partisanship” during this election year and forget that the Scriptures call us to pray for “all in authority.” This includes the president, elected officials, and those running for office.
 - Do you pray on a regular basis for the president and elected officials, whether you agree with them or not, e.g., that they would become faithful, obedient followers of Christ and his commandments?
 - Do you believe that your prayers, and the prayers of other Christians, can make a difference on these officials and the direction of our country? If not, why not?
 - Is it possible for you to be so full of anger or argument at elected officials, or candidates running for office, that you refuse to heed this Scriptural admonition to pray for them? How can you overcome this?
4. In the Gospel, Jesus tells of the “dishonest” steward who was asked for a “full account” of his stewardship.
 - How would you respond if Christ were to ask you to account for how you have used all the gifts and graces he has given you?
 - Are you willing to take some additional steps to improve the stewardship of your time, talents, and treasures? How?
5. Jesus also reminds us that “The person who is trustworthy in very small matters is also trustworthy in great ones; and the person who is dishonest in very small matters is also dishonest in great ones.”
 - What do these words mean to you?
 - Can you identify any situations in business, or in your relationships, where you might excuse yourself by saying, “it’s so small it really doesn’t matter?”
6. In the meditation, we hear these words: “Today’s Gospel asks us, ‘What is your attitude toward money?’ Here are a few ideas that might help you answer that question.” These “ideas” are then described as follows: “First, having money is not a sin. It’s our love of money that separates us from God. Jesus wants to be first in our lives—above our money and possessions. Second, Jesus asks us to be good stewards of our money. He wants us to be prudent, honest, and responsible. . . . Third, donating to the Church and other charities, even if we can give only a small amount, is a key aspect of our stewardship. . . . Finally, remember that your money is not yours; it belongs to God.”
 - How do these four ideas, or principles, apply to your stewardship of your money?
 - How would you describe the ways the Lord may want you to be a better steward of your money?
7. Take some time now to pray and ask the Lord for the grace to be a good steward of the many gifts he has given you, including money. Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as a starting point.

“Jesus, teach me to be a good steward.”

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, who is in partner relations for **The Word Among Us Partners**, (<http://www.waupartners.org/>); a ministry of **The Word Among Us** (www.wau.org) to the military, prisoners, women with crisis pregnancies or who have had abortions, and college students. He is

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