

Deacon Mike's Sermon for September 25, 2016

A lot of people say "money is the root of all evil" thinking they are quoting the Bible.

But what the Bible actually says in 1 Tim 6 is that, "the love of money is the root of all evil."

Jesus never condemns the wealthy for having wealth!

He did condemn those who put their wealth before God.

In the book Huckleberry Finn, Huck said it well, "It ain't the parts to the Bible I don't understand that bother me; it's the parts I do understand."

Today's gospel is one of those parts we do understand, but rarely do we want to!

This homily won't be a money talk in the sense of "they are always asking for money", that can be a pain.

But it will be a money talk asking the important question "In light of the gospel, what do you do with your money?"

Or, if you want to phrase it another way, "How does money fit in with your identity as a Catholic, as a disciple of Jesus?"

Or, "How does money define my spirituality?"

Our instant internal answer is most likely, "None of your business!"

But think about it.

The way we make, use, and spend your money is, in fact, a significant part of your entire human life.

It is a central concern of our lives, making, managing, and spending money that is near a full time occupation in itself.

Yet, many might say, this central act which takes up most of our existence has no bearing on our spiritual life?

Like the rich man in today's gospel, we are asked to think about money and wealth. I mean really think about it.

Every once in a while we might think about how spending controls our lives as we endlessly upgrade our software, clothing, phones, autos, bigger and larger homes that in many ways are more empty.

Today's corporations feed us our daily fare of media and commercial TV, with its associated advertising enticing us to spend and acquire more and more, replacing the fad of the previous year adding to the world's junk heap.

Is there ever enough money?

How much time do we even have to notice the Lazarus's that surround us?

Take for the example the following story:

Emma was a very busy woman, very successful; she would fly all over the world and do her work.

But, like many of us, she got tired and was just looking for a little space and time and a little place of solitude to be by herself.

So, on the way to the airport she decided once there, she would find a nice little chair and wait for her flight, be by herself and read a book.

So once there, she checked in and found a quiet place.

A few minutes later, an old woman came by and sat down next to her.

After a few minutes the old woman said, "I bet its cold in Chicago".

And Emma said, yeah, I guess so."

The old woman kept asking her questions and talking and all the while Emma answered her coldly, with disinterested answers.

And finally, the old woman said, "I am going to Chicago to bring my husband back.

We were married 53 years ago and he died suddenly. I'm bringing his body back to Chicago."

Emma put her book down and she reached out and she held the old woman's hand.

And they talked and talked, and she realized that this old woman needed someone to listen to her---even if a stranger.

Soon the call was made to board the plane and so they walked together.

Emma was a few rows back of the old lady, and as she was stuffing her coat up in the rack, saw the old lady take her seat.

Soon a young man sat down next to her and Emma heard the old lady say to the younger guy, "I bet you it's cold in Chicago."

All Emma could do was to say a little prayer that the young man would listen.

Isn't it easy to get caught up in our pursuit of money, careers, accumulation of things more than we would ever need.

Brothers and sisters, our consumer culture makes it very hard, to live with a philosophy of enough".

It takes our time and energy away from us.

"Born to shop" is more than a funny slogan; many times it's our way of life.

Our money goes beyond necessities to trivia, to the waste and the dulling awareness through constant entertainment.

None of us escapes this brainwashing.

All of us have been conditioned in some way, ever since we first sat in front of a TV or travel thru commercial districts and learn not only to identify brand names,

but to also desire things we really don't need and need things we really don't desire,

And to believe that we are defined by our possessions.....

The rest of life for many is a pursuit of the "more" which never satisfies, since there is always more.

The point is that our use and accumulation of money, our spending, defines us not only in the cultural consumer sense but in a spiritual sense.

You may have seen the bumper sticker that says, "—the one who dies with the most toys wins".

We may become the objects we covet.

We become enslaved to the cycle of "more is better" and sadly, have little time to live with enough, enjoy enough, savor enough, be content with enough, and give away what's more than enough.

Do we generously give away the so called scraps from our table?

We must do better than that?

So, what do we do?

I think of the story of a Charles Feeney, worth over 600 million dollars, who one day decided to live a simpler, less consumerist lifestyle, and who almost secretly gave away his 600 million without anyone knowing about it.

All he kept for himself was one-half of one percent of his entire estate for his old age. Before he died he owned no car, no house, and lived a simple remarkable lifestyle.

We can reflect on the role of money and goods in our lives too What is truly important and deal with it.

We can make a commitment to take 10% of the value of our purchases and direct it to charitable giving.

We can get involved the social work of the church and respond to the needs of the Lazarus's that may be in our lives.

Brothers and Sisters

Which side of the great chasm noted in the Gospel does our lifestyle put us? The side with Lazarus or the rich man?

JMJ