

V1_8th_after_Pentecost= The Vain Labor of the Avaricious

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JMJ

U.I.O.G.D.

Ave Maria!

Jesus, Mary, Joseph, we love You, save souls

O God come to our assistance. Jesus, Mary, Joseph please make haste to help us!

+ + + Jesus, Mary, Joseph + + +

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EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The Vain Labor of the Avaricious

“There was a certain rich man.”—Luke 16: 1



Even rich people may be deceived and robbed, as happened to the rich man described in today’s Gospel, who was so unjustly treated by his own steward, who not only robbed him of his goods, but also tried to make an unjust profit out of his debtors. Therefore, money and riches are not able to make one happy, because those who strive for wealth and riches find nothing in them but vanity. For

I. An avaricious man, who seeks money and property, gains nothing in time.

II. And nothing in eternity.

I. A young prince, who was once out hunting, came to a cave in a forest, where he found the celebrated hermit Macedonius, who had spent over sixty years in this solitude. Surprised at the appearance of the old man, he asked him what he was doing in that solitude. The hermit answered: “I believe we are both of the same profession; you are a hunter, and I am a hunter also; I hunt after and seek my God, and I will not cease until I have caught him.” We read of St. Cajetan: “He labored most assiduously for the salvation of his neighbor, so that he was called a hunter of souls.” We read of the Emperor Domitian that he used to spend many hours in doing nothing but catching flies, and he would laugh with pleasure when he succeeded in spitting a fly on a needle, or in killing it with his hand. What a difference between these huntsmen!

We are all hunters in this life; daily we go a-hunting; but what kind of game do we seek? Good Christians, like that holy hermit, go out in search of their God; and God will say to them: “I will be thy reward exceeding great” (Gen. 15: 1).

Zealous servants of God, who by their edifying lives and virtuous example, by bringing up their children in a holy manner, by avoiding scandal, by fraternal correction and exhortation of the wicked, by visiting the sick and helping the poor, seek to bring others to heaven with them, happy hunters are they! They hunt souls, like Cajetan; they will find what they desire, and their glory in heaven will be increased by the souls they convert.

Vain worldlings, who are busied every day with a hundred cares for the sake of some temporal gain or some momentary pleasure, meanwhile forgetting their souls as completely as if they had none, what do

they hunt? Like Domitian, they hunt flies, which escape out of their hands, and even when they have caught one they have nothing but a worthless insect.

1. There are three classes of those who are engaged in the pursuit of temporal riches; for they are either prodigal with their money, or avaricious, or moderate. None of the three classes catch anything but worthless flies, especially when money is the end and object of their labor. It is clear enough that the prodigal gain nothing, for they squander away on dress or luxurious living, or in some other foolish way, the money they made by their labor.

2. Those who use their riches in moderation, what do they gain? Besides their gold, which, after all, is only a piece of metal, they gain many cares and anxieties, much disquiet and trouble, much labor and fatigue, for they have to run hither and thither, either to get riches, or to keep them, or to increase them. Therefore our Lord compared riches to thorns: he who wishes to pluck the rose must not be astonished if the thorns prick him. You may be rolling in wealth, but you have gained nothing but food and clothing; a few times a day you can eat and drink your fill that is all. You have a grand house, you may have three or four of them; now, tell me the truth, are you therefore able to take up more room than before? Certainly not; you are not able to fill up even one room in your house. Your coffers may be filled with gold; are you, then, in need of more food and drink than before? Certainly not. "What doth it profit the owner but that he seeth the riches with his eyes?" (Eccles. 5: 10) for it is only the least part of his gold that he can make use of; the greater part he can only look at and admire. Even the richest kings and princes, with all their pomp and wealth, can have nothing more than food, clothing, and lodging; and therefore an ordinary citizen, who has only food, clothing, and lodging, and who desires nothing else, is far happier and more contented than a Croesus. Why, then should we have such an inordinate desire to increase our wealth if our nature is content with so little? Why should I trouble myself about things that I can never use or enjoy?

3. Let us now consider the third class, namely, the avaricious; that is, those who seek money, and live parsimoniously, and do all they can to increase their stock, not because they intend to make use of it, but solely that they may become rich; they are those who love money for its own sake. This greed of gain is the most foolish of passions, because it brings no advantage or profit to him who is subject to it. St. Paul calls it, "a serving of idols" (Ephes. 5: 5). And why? There is nothing more foolish than to adore false gods. This folly is committed by the avaricious man, who loves his money and keeps it for its own sake; for he loves a thing that is not worthy of love, and profits him nothing. The whole value and charm of money consists only in the use of it, in the fact that I can give it in exchange for food, clothing, lodging, and other necessities or pleasures of life. In former times, as we learn from history, money was coined out of the hides of oxen, through want of metals or the skill required to work them. Were people any worse off then than we are now? No we are neither better off nor richer because we have gold and silver coin to buy the necessities of life with; the same things might have been had formerly for copper money. We pay ten cents or more now for what would then have cost but one cent, and where I must now spend five dollars, I should have had then to spend but one. Money is like food: if I cannot enjoy the food, what good is it to me? What good is money to me if I cannot or will not make use of it? I certainly cannot eat it. Still, there is this difference between money and food, that by the use and enjoyment of the food I increase my bodily health and strength, while the good of money consists in my giving it away to others. If I had a bag full of gold in my room, and were lawful owner of it, but were forbidden to give any of it away, of what use would it be to me unless merely to look at?

No one makes less use of money than the miser; he will not and cannot part with it; there is no one who eats, drinks, and lives more miserably; he would rather starve than spend a penny of his hidden treasures; he would rather cut off his hand than give away any of his gold for a lawful pleasure or enjoyment; his only care is how to increase his store. "The eye of the covetous man is insatiable; he will not be satisfied till he consumes his own soul, drying it up" (Ecclus. 14: 9). The more he has, the more he desires. In the other desires of the senses one can easily find sufficient satisfaction; when I have looked at a beautiful

picture an hour or so, I get tired of it and go away. No matter how fine music may be, if we hear too much of it our ears grow wearied. Food and drink, no matter how good they are, cause disgust when we have had our fill of them. But the insatiable miser is never satisfied. Experience generally teaches that the less one's income is the more ready he is in giving, and the more willing to procure for himself lawful pleasures: a thing that a rich miser would not dream of doing. The miser is as poor as a beggar, in the midst of his wealth.

The miser is even worse off than a beggar; for the beggar, when he gets a little money, spends it with joy to purchase what he is in need of; but the miser, when he is forced to spend a trifle for the bare necessities of life, does it as unwillingly as if it was his heart's blood he was depriving himself of. Thus the use of his riches causes him more trouble and anxiety than pleasure and satisfaction; he possesses wealth, but has nothing from it; he is frightened at the bare idea of having to spend money to keep himself from starving. He is annoyed at seeing any one come into his house, lest he should have to spend anything on him. If his clothes show signs of old age, he shudders at the thought of having to get new ones. If his wife or one of his children gets sick, he is almost beside himself, not with pity, but through fear of having to pay for medicines.

Besides that, he draws down on himself the hatred and scorn of others; he is always ridiculed; his neighbors dislike him, his friends are ashamed of him and avoid him; the poor and needy curse him; tradesmen and laborers are unwilling to work for him, because they have just reason for suspecting that he will not pay them, or that he will keep them waiting a long time for payment; his servants cannot bear him, because he feeds them so badly; nay, he is even hateful sometimes to his own wife and children, because they do not get enough from him to be able to dress according to their position. In nearly all comedies a miser is brought on the stage to excite the laughter of the audience; no one pities his misfortunes, they are rather a source of enjoyment. Thieves hardly think it a sin to steal from him, and sometimes they do so, not for the sake of what they can carry off, but to vex the miser. He is generally compared to a swine that is of no good to any one till it is dead. But if the avaricious man gains nothing in time, he gains far less for his soul in eternity.

II. The foolish miser knows well that he will not be able to take a single penny with him into the next world; he must acknowledge, with St. Paul: "We brought nothing into this world, and certainly we can carry nothing out" (1 Tim. 6: 7). The huntsmen go out with their dogs; they look around for game most eagerly, and if they see a hare jumping out of a bush, what a noise they make! They run here and there, and set the dogs after the hare with loud cries; but when the dogs have caught it they take it from them at once. The same thing happens to the avaricious. When they have got what they want, very often death comes and cries out to them to leave it. Where is my money? He asks. You must leave it, answers death. Where are my houses and lands, and my costly furniture? You must leave them. Away with you at once, poor and naked, into eternity! Everything you have you must leave to others, whether you wish it or not; to others, who will perhaps squander it away most recklessly, who will not even thank you for it, nor say an Our Father for your soul, because you gave them nothing during your life.

Is it possible that we should plague and torment ourselves about those perishable goods, which are worth nothing in time, nothing at all in eternity? And yet nearly every one is most eager in pursuit of them. If people employed for God and heaven the fourth, nay, even the tenth, part of the labor and trouble they give themselves to amass worldly wealth, they would become great Saints in heaven. How much is done and suffered daily for the sake of money, and how little is done in a whole year for God and heaven! Shout from the pulpit until you are hoarse, exhort the people to come to church on Sundays and holydays, to hear the word of God and do something for their souls, and you will see that many Catholics can find a hundred excuses: the church is too far away, the weather is too severe, others have something to do at home. Preach to them of fasting, alms-giving, mortification of the senses, Christian meekness and humility, to which the law of Christ binds every one, and they will find a hundred excuses to dispense themselves: fasting is bad for their health, alms-giving they cannot afford, they are too delicate to practice

mortification. So that it is too difficult and almost impossible to do anything for God and one's soul. Gold! Oh, what a far greater power has it over the hearts of men! No mortification is too great, no labor too heavy, no humiliation too degrading, no way too rough, no weather too severe, no time too precious, nothing so troublesome as to frighten away one who has a hope of gaining gold! Ask one to expose himself to a thousand dangers, either on the stormy sea, or on land amongst robbers and murderers, and you will find enough who are only too willing to do so! They will do for the love of gold what they will not do for the love of God.

How unwisely we act, although the day is appointed for us to die; behold, the day and the hour will come when death will take away all you have; how unwise to strain every power of soul and body to heap up riches, and to forget the interests of the soul! Is it not foolish to plague ourselves so much in the pursuit of that which cannot content us when we have it, and to neglect the only good that is able to satisfy us fully? Poor ye are, oh, rich, if you have lost your God! Woe to you that are rich if your hearts are fixed on riches and temporal goods. Rich are ye, oh, poor, if in your poverty you have gained God alone; you shall be rich enough for time and eternity, for God will be your reward exceeding great. Amen.

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