

The Touchy Subject

a sermon preached on the

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at

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Lection: Luke 16:1-13

Money – “the touchy subject” – “the conscience pricker” – the subject no one wants to talk about. But “money talks”. What is it saying to us and about us. Maybe one of the reasons money speaks so loudly is that money can mean power. The person who controls the purse strings calls the shots. For some people money means security, for others it is a means of control. Sometimes it signifies independence. Often it is viewed as an indication of status or self esteem.

We may be reluctant to admit it, but our money is “us.” The abundance of it or the lack of it doesn't matter but it is how we obtain and spend our money that tells a great deal about our priorities, principles and commitments. When we realise how important money is to people, it's no wonder we have so many questions about how to get it, how to keep it, how to use it, how to invest it. Money matters in our lives and it matters a lot. Money and wealth is not the problem, the problem is the way it is administered and used. The use of our money is a test of our stewardship. It is vital that we get a grip on it before it gets a stranglehold on us. Money has the power to take God's place in our lives. It can become our master and a deceptive one. Wealth promises power and control, but great fortunes can be made and lost over night and no amount of money can provide happiness, love, health or eternal life.

Wealth, if used wrongly can be a killer. A great number of the stories in the newspapers and on television seem to be about the misuse of money in one way or another. The glamour and glitz it seems to provide, the shock and horror when it runs out, the never ending scandals about obtaining it, embezzling it, losing it and getting it again, the robberies and burglaries and other ways in which money is at the centre of wrong doing. We could very easily get the impression that God wants us to live in poverty. I do not believe that being poor makes us any more of a Christian than having wealth. The presence or absence of money is immaterial – it is the management of what we have been given that is the key – Luke's gospel chapter 16: 10 – 12 spells it out: “Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trust with much and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth who will trust you with riches, and if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property who will give you property of your own.”

Having wealth is not wrong and we should not covet what God gives to others. Our task is to discover what God has planned for us, then do it, using the gift of time, talents and money He has given us for the benefit of all. Our life is a book of many pages, and at times it can be difficult to see any relationship between one page and another. We long for that inner unity in our lives, the integration of all the parts and energies. Life is not simply a matter of self-determination. We soon discover that what we think is best or important constitutes a very limited perspective. We need to seek advice and to be open to the input of others. Our spiritual growth is not a matter of self-effort alone. It is a matter of unity and communion. It is drawing on the wisdom of others who have walked the road before us. Spirituality matures not just from self-effort, but also from being led and listening to the will of God. It has to do with surrender, and hearing those things we have not thought of which may even cut across our aspirations and expectations. Our spirituality and discipleship will experience the difficult and lonely road. It will know the cost of relinquishment. It will know what it means to be led and what it costs to walk in God's will. Discipleship is the road of faith, the road of risk taking, the road of hard decisions.

As disciples' of Christ we must be open to change. To grow is to be challenged. We are to build relationships across previously conditioned boundaries of age, gender, race, religion and nationality. We are to be a people of hope and vision. We are called to be leaders in our community, where parish responsibility is shared between clergy and laity.

As disciples' of Christ we are called to think beyond our own self-centredness and to be faithful witnesses to the gospel of Christ. To be committed to justice and peace making, and the liberation and acceptance of all people and the way we use our money is an integral part of this. To be committed to the risk of deep sharing and trust, trust in Christ and trust in each other. Jesus and the prophets had a passion and a dream. As disciples we are called to turn that dream into a reality – in this world – at this time. Amen.

References: D.J. O'Leary, T. Wright