

## **Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time – August 3, 2025 – Good Shepherd Parish**

### **Scripture Reading: Ecclesiastes 1:2; 2:21-23**

Vanity of vanities, says Qoheleth,  
vanity of vanities! All things are vanity!

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. This also is vanity and a great misfortune. For what profit comes to man from all the toil and anxiety of heart with which he has labored under the sun? All his days sorrow and grief is his occupation; even at night his mind is not at rest. This also is vanity.

### **Psalms: Ps 90:3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 14 & 17**

R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

You turn man back to dust,  
saying, "Return, O children of men."  
For a thousand years in your sight  
are as yesterday, now that it is past,  
or as a watch of the night.

R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

You make an end of them in their sleep;  
the next morning they are like the changing grass,  
which at dawn springs up anew,  
but by evening wilts and fades.

R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Teach us to number our days aright,  
that we may gain wisdom of heart.  
Return, O LORD! How long?  
Have pity on your servants!

R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Fill us at daybreak with your kindness,  
that we may shout for joy and gladness all our days.  
And may the gracious care of the LORD our God be  
ours;  
prosper the work of our hands for us!  
Prosper the work of our hands!

### **Scripture Reading: Colossians 3:1-5, 9-11**

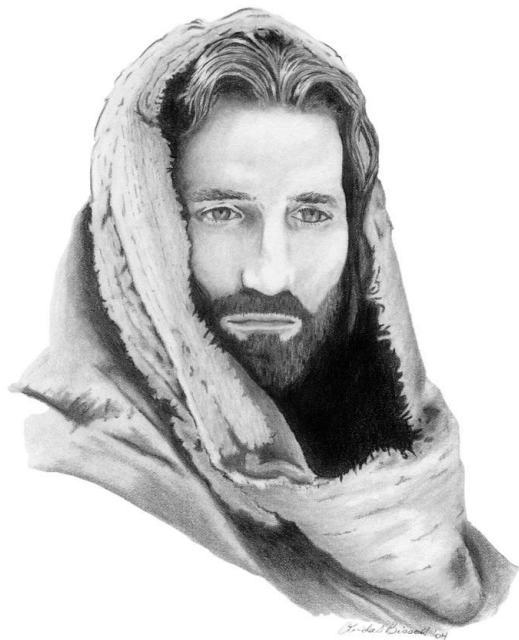
Brothers and sisters: If you were raised with Christ, seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Think of what is above, not of what is on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ your life appears, then you too will appear with him in glory. Put to death, then, the parts of you that are earthly: immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and the greed that is idolatry. Stop lying to one another, since you have taken off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed, for knowledge, in the image of its creator. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all and in all.

### **Gospel: Luke 12:13-21**

Someone in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, tell my brother to share the inheritance with me." He replied to him, "Friend, who appointed me as your judge and arbitrator?" Then he said to the crowd, "Take care to guard against all greed, for though one may be rich, one's life does not consist of possessions."

Then he told them a parable. "There was a rich man whose land produced a bountiful harvest. He asked himself, 'What shall I do, for I do not have space to store my harvest?' And he said, 'This is what I shall do: I shall tear down my barns and build larger ones. There I shall store all my grain and other goods and I shall say to myself, "Now as for you, you have so many good things stored up for many years, rest, eat, drink, be merry!"' But God said to him, 'You fool, this night your life will be demanded of you; and the things you have prepared, to whom will they belong?' Thus will it be for all who store up treasure for themselves but are not rich in what matters to God."

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### **INVITATION TO PRAY**

*Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God.*

### **Proclaim the Scriptures out loud.**

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

### **INVITATION TO REFLECT**

The word “vanity” has come to mean “excessive belief in your own abilities or your attractiveness to others.” But the original meaning of the word, the one that makes sense of the First Reading, was “empty or valueless.” “In vain” comes closer to the meaning. So when Qoheleth, the presumed author of this Reading says, “vanity of vanities! All things are vanity,” he means that everything we do is in vain. This is like a statement of despair. Likely he would be diagnosed today with depression. Maybe you or I, at the bottom of our hearts, would be tempted to this dark vision also, especially with so many things going wrong today. Is the answer found when the beer commercials tell us “it doesn’t get any better than this,” illustrating people as they drink too much, with laughing, perfect smiles? We have to wonder if maybe there is something more to live for than this. So let us ask whether the First Reading is correct, that our lives are truly “in vain.” The reading gives a dark answer. What profit comes to man from all the toil and anxiety of heart with which he has labored under the sun? All his days sorrow and grief are their occupation; even at night his mind is not at rest. Do we recognize this state? Is our life devoted to riches or looking good? No? Then are we dedicated to “the bottom line,” to fighting for “enough” (so we will have something to live for)? Qoheleth says we seek these things in vain. Maybe we should listen to him. Maybe we should stop ignoring the poor, for instance.

Look at the Gospel. There Jesus says succinctly that our life should not consist of possessions, even though we may have plenty. He tells the famous parable about a very rich man who produces a huge harvest and is busy tearing down his barns to build still larger ones in order to hoard more. Read it. Then ask, is that a reasonable way to live? Must be, because we can find it all through Americanized cultures, constructing ever flashier buildings in our cities even while drugs and poverty beset our very lives. Don’t we say that values are unnecessary? Do we use other people to get what we want? Just like the man in Jesus’ story. Just like what Qoheleth calls “vanity.” Well, this particular rich man got a nasty surprise when he went about eating, drinking and being merry (Gospel). God said to him, “You fool, this night your life will be demanded of you; and the things you have prepared, to whom will they belong?” Thus will it be for all who store up treasure for themselves. Could this be said to you or me? “You fool!” Whether we are rich or poor, are we trying to hoard what we have? Are we being children of God or children of mammon? Truth is, human beings are fashioned in such a way that we are able to open up to the source and summit of all love, God. This might be the one thing that makes life worth living! If we cannot see over the piles of possessions we have (or wish we had), aren’t our honors and gains in vain? If death were on its way to us this very night, what would God say to us?

### **INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING**

1. Is there more of “toil and anxiety” than you want in your life? Would an increase in faith serve the same purpose as a pill for curing anxiety?
2. The second line of this reading says, “If you were raised with Christ, seek what is above.” What about you—what do you seek? Where do you look for what you seek? How important is it to you to take off the “old self with its practices and put on the new self”?
3. Many would determine a person’s worth by the greatness of their house or their portfolio or the make of their car. How do you determine a person’s worth? Is it possible for a person to have much and still give much?

### **INVITATION TO ACT**

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

### **CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY**

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another’s openness and sensitivity. Conclude with the following:

Draw near to your servants, O Lord, and answer their prayers with unceasing kindness, that, for those who glory in you as their Creator and guide, you may restore what you have created and keep safe what you have restored. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen

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### **Prayer to St. Michael**

St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our defense against the wickedness and snares of the Devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray, and do thou, O Prince of the heavenly hosts, by the power of God, thrust into hell Satan, and all the evil spirits, who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen