

18th Sunday in Ordinary Time (2025) – Year C

Most of us understand a million dollars. Some of us might even know someone who has a million dollars. Some of the larger parishes in our diocese, like ours, have an annual budget well over a million dollars.

We know that in this country, there are people whom we refer to as billionaires, people like Warren Buffett and Bill Gates. Those of us who are good at math know that a billion dollars is just one million thousand-dollar bills.

However, it isn't easy to imagine a trillion dollars. The top 0.1% of the wealthiest people in America have total assets of nearly 11 trillion dollars.

How long would it take to spend just one trillion dollars?

If you were to spend \$1 million every single day, it would take you 2,740 years to spend one trillion dollars. That's more than two millennia of non-stop spending.

And if you were to spend \$1 billion every single day, it would still take you 2,740 days, or roughly 7.5 years, to spend one trillion dollars. That's some kind of shopping spree!

I am sometimes amazed at people who spend hundreds and hundreds of dollars a year at these "storage places" where they stockpile all of the excess "stuff" they can't seem to fit into their homes, closets, and garages.

One has to stop and think: How much is enough? How much is too much?

"This night your life will be demanded of you, and the things you have prepared, to whom will they belong?" Lk 12:20

One of the first challenges that is often raised after listening to this parable of the "Rich Fool" is: "What's so wrong about the pursuit of wealth and security?"

I would turn such a question backwards: "What is so right about the pursuit of wealth and security?"

Surely, even the Church pursues wealth. If one were to make a tally of the value of every possession owned by the Church, there is no doubt the figure would be staggering.

Once upon a time, and maybe still today, many Evangelicals believed in what is called the *prosperity gospel*. A belief system among some Christians that financial and physical well-being are direct results of faith in God, often achieved through positive thinking, tithing, and other practices.

It suggests that material success is a sign of divine favor and blessings, and that poverty is a sign of a weakness of faith.

Don't we all practice the gospel of prosperity? Is there not more than sufficient evidence in our vaults and banks, portfolios and stocks, crypto and cash? If I were accused, my response would be "guilty as charged!"

But notice very carefully what Jesus says as the concluding point of his parable.

"So, it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich in the sight of God." Lk 12:21

Let us not be foolish and deny this singular truth. There will be a day and a time when every one of us will be stripped of all our material goods— all of the earthly treasures we hold onto ever so tightly. But...

- **Don't mistake your time in this life for eternity.**

We are reminded in Scripture that tomorrow is not guaranteed, so making the mistake of defining our lives by tomorrow rather than today is a key thing to remember in this story. Life isn't defined by tomorrow; it's defined by today.

- **Don't mistake your body for your soul.**

You could lose your health, your wealth, even your capacity to do things because of paralysis or disease, but even without all those things, God's definition of life exists outside of all that.

- **Don't mistake what is yours for what is God's.**

An old adage states: “What’s yours is mine and what’s mine is mine.”

Our names may be on a title or deed, but our ownership is only a temporary arrangement. In the grand scheme of things, we’re only responsible for our belongings while we’re living on earth.

Everything exists because of Jesus and for Jesus. To determine how to use something lies in what Jesus created it for. Knowing who is the source of all things shows us how to use all things.

If my car belongs to God, I can use it to give a friend a ride when his car is in the shop. If my house belongs to God, I can use it to host a Group so people can connect and grow in their relationships with Jesus. If God owns my wallet, I can use my money to provide for people in need.

"The king and the pawn go back in the same box at the end of the game. When life is over, everybody goes back in the box. It doesn't matter whether you are a king or a pawn; we all go back in the box."