

## POSSESS YOUR STUFF—JUST DON'T LET YOUR STUFF

### **POSSESS YOU!**

(The 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time: Cycle C)

*September 22-23, 2007*

If you look around this church today, you will see people of all ages, from the youngest to the oldest. Regardless of where you are in life, I invite you to ask yourself this question: what makes you happy—really? Are you at a point in your life where you can define what real happiness—happiness in the “God sense” is? You know, I look at all of the children in my life (my nieces and nephews), and I can’t help but notice that, the older most of them get, the more “stuff” they want! Seriously. (And, look, I say this with no shame, because I’ve been into many other homes outside of my own family, and wondered the same thing.) Some of the children in my family, for example, have so many toys—so much stuff—that it’s hard to walk from the door of their bedrooms to their bed, their closet, across the room at all! It does seem true, for a lot of us, that, the older we get—the more stuff we want! What we’re supposed to be about as we grow older is acquiring less and less, but many people want more and more.

That’s why visiting with my youngest niece, Aubrey, is always so refreshing. I use to worry that, as my family had more and more children, I’d be one of those uncles who felt that he had to buy his nieces and nephews a lot of things. Aubrey, however, at the age of 2, is simply content to just take a walk. In fact, nothing seems to make her happier. Whenever I arrive there (at my sister’s home, where I stay on my day off), she always comes running up to me, calling out my name. Then, when all of that is over, she almost always, I mean, almost every single time, says the same thing—one word, “WALK?” And we have our little routine. We walk out to the end of the short driveway, and I ask her, “O.K., which way?” She’ll point either to the left or right, and then we’ll take off. I could give her more “stuff” whenever I see her, but right now, at this point in her life, this little time outside is what she enjoys.

Now, don’t get me wrong. I’m a realist too, and I realize that, as she grows older, at least part of this will change. I won’t be surprised if she comes to the point in her life where she wants her own IPOD, cell phone, computer, and

maybe even one day, her own car. But for now, taking a walk is something that seems to make her very, very happy.

(Pause)

Sometimes I think that all God wants from us—is to just take a walk with us. Sometimes I think that all the Lord hopes for from us is to be able to pull us away, just for a moment, from our “stuff”—from our busyness, our obligations, our jobs, finances, bills, money, you name it—and just take a walk with us. Because it is in these kinds of moments, these moments when we just stop long enough to breath and count to three, that we realize how blessed we really are—and how much we really DO NOT need.

I realize that this Gospel may sound a little strange. First of all, it’s kind of long. Then, the story uses words and expressions that most of us are not familiar with, such as, “kors of wheat.” And then, there’s this thing about, “making friends with earthly wealth.” It would take more time than we have here today to explain it completely, but it is enough to say that this is simply a story about a guy who came to realize that he needed to make some changes in his life, that he needed to reprioritize things. (Now, granted, he makes this change out of fear, but nevertheless, Jesus commends him for his ingenuity.) And then he finishes up with those words that a lot of us have heard before, “no one can serve two masters.” (Which master do we serve? God? Or our stuff?) And then the words, “you cannot serve both God and mammon.” Now, a lot of people think that “mammon” means money. And it does. But it doesn’t just refer to money only. It refers to anything that comes under the category of “earthly riches.” (And, while it’s not a material thing, time is one of our greatest riches. This particular Gospel asks, among other questions, how are we “spending” our time?)

There will always be a tension for us between living in this world and knowing that this world is not our final home. There will always be a tension between “wanting stuff” and wanting a holier way of life. If there are any lessons to be learned from this parable, there would be two for sure: possess your stuff—just don’t let your stuff possess you. And, be generous with what you have.

So, what makes you happy? Only in our hearts can we answer whether or not the things of this world get more priority from us than they should.

I came across a quote yesterday in an article online, and I had to laugh when I read it, because it's so true: "money may not be everything, but it's way ahead of whatever's in second place!"

(Pause)

What gets first place in our life?

The people of the Buddhist religion believe that everything we need for true happiness lies right before us, right within us. Their philosophy is "less is more." I also recently read a saying from a Buddhist monk: "Be at peace with what you have. Rejoice in the way things are. When you realize that there is nothing lacking, then it is as if the whole world belongs to you."

Stop.

Breathe.

Take a walk with God. Each day. Somehow, somewhere, in some way, just stop and be at peace with the world around you and the belief that God is with you always and will always provide for your needs.

Then will we have true happiness.

And all of our "stuff" will fall into its proper place.