

HOMILY SUNDAY 19 – C

“Be Ready - Live In The Kingdom”

(Wisdom 18:6-9; Psalm 33; Hebrews 11:1-2, 8-19; Luke 12:32-48)

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How free a person are you?

Personal freedom, readiness and generosity are signs of a lively faith.

Corbin Eddy had just finished a talk when an aboriginal elder offered him a beautiful beaded belt buckle. He resisted accepting it as too expensive, and too big. The elder simply told him that he could give it to someone else. At that, he accepted it, and later on did give it to a student who had done exceptionally well and whom it would fit. The student also resisted receiving it, so Eddy told him how it had come to him, and the student accepted it.

Eddy has come to realize that this buckle was not a possession but a gift to be given away. It was a mission in disguise. He learned that all possessions will eventually be given away or taken from us. The changing nature of life means that there is nothing we can permanently hang on to. The deeper realization for him was that life itself was a gift to be given away. He needed to be free to give and to receive – both made possible by a lively faith in Jesus through whom God has given us everything.

The readings today speak of faith, a strong faith in the providence of God that frees us to be generous, to be free from anxiety, and to be ready at all times to let go of life itself. Ultimately, we are invited to be this way by living in the Kingdom, a kingdom of peace, joy, intimacy with God and close relationships with others.

The New Interpreters Bible offers some salient reflections on the gospel of today. These verses suggest the antidote to anxiety. What greater denial of a life controlled by anxiety could there be than a devotion to providing for the needs of others? If there are only two basic impulses, either to grasp or to give, then the alternative to anxiety over what we do not possess or control is to release our grasp of that which we do control. We can lay up treasure on earth or in heaven – but not in both places. The choice must be either/or – either our own advancement or the advancement of the kingdom, either earthly goods or heavenly treasures, either our own concerns or God’s.

The concern of the rich fool was the preservation of his wealth, but the treasure one lays up in heaven through devotion to the kingdom is unailing. The person whose treasure is in heaven will not be anxious about material things. Jesus warns against trying to secure the future by laying up earthly treasure and counsels instead the wisdom of wholehearted devotion to God’s kingdom. True security is to be found not in wealth but in God’s providence.

Faith in Jesus Christ awakens our consciousness of the spiritual dimensions of life. By so doing, faith allows and even forces us to see our lives from a new perspective. Then we can see that some of the things we have been so concerned about are not all that important. We may also see that we have not given enough attention to important things: family, friends, a more just and peaceful society, or our own personal, intellectual and spiritual development. When the rat race of materialism threatens to control you, remember Jesus' words: there is more to life.

Followers of Jesus should be the freest of persons because they are devoted to higher things. This cluster of sayings offers both the challenge to centre one's life on promoting concerns related to God's kingdom and the extravagant promise of God's providence for those who will do so.

What changes would we make if we were as concerned about God's kingdom as we are about the size of next month's pay-check, the next harvest, or the next step up the career ladder? What value would we give to reconciling broken relationships, sharing the gospel of God's love and working for peace and justice for the oppressed? How much more ready would we be to face the ultimate test of death were our faith like that of Abraham who was able to set out into the unknown.

I had a little lesson on this kind of readiness when I was asked to drive one of our professors, Fr. Aloysius Kedl to an adjacent town so he could prepare his presentation. I settled in for a silent drive when he pulled out a scribbler and started writing. Ten minutes later he put it away and I remarked, "What, finished already in 10 minutes?" He replied calmly, "Twenty three years and ten minutes." That is when I realized that his experience over all those years had made him ready to give a talk on short notice. That is a kingdom value – to be always ready to give on short notice, because we are always prepared by always giving.

The Eucharist that we celebrate now is a foretaste of the heavenly banquet; a pre-view; both call to conversion and means of healing.

So, pray for the faith to be ready, free, generous and live in the Kingdom.