

Homily for 23 November 2008

Ninth Sunday of the Holy Cross, Gospel: Luke 12:16-22
28th Sunday after Pentecost, Epistle: Colossians 1:12-18

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells us, "Do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear." He speaks directly, even bluntly. His meaning is plain to understand.

In today's Epistle, St Paul tells us *why* we should not worry. He says, also quite clearly, that God "has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." Jesus is "before all things, and in Him all things hold together."

When times are easy and life is good, when we have plenty of good things to eat and lots of nice clothes to wear, new and stylish and beautiful (though not always comfortable or practical!), we are often like the rich man who thinks that all his prosperity comes from his own efforts and says to himself: "relax, eat, drink, be merry."

When times are hard and life gets difficult, even desperate, we start to worry about how we'll pay our bills and put food on the table. We might be anxious about keeping up our comfortable, even extravagant, lifestyles. We might wonder how we can do without the luxuries and treats we've come to take for granted. Like the foolish rich man, we might discover that everything we thought we had prepared will be taken away.

And then we might think, "All I have left is God," which can make God sound like a poor substitute for all the good stuff we used to have. It can make God sound like the inadequate payment on a desperate insurance claim.

But what if we understand "All I have left is God" in a different way?

St Paul reminds us—teaches us, actually—that God is the source and foundation of all we have. God has first place in everything, and we should give thanks to God always.

Yes, God is what we have left when everything else is taken away—and that's because God is what we start with before everything else gets piled on top.

The trouble is that sometimes everything that gets piled on top—success, money, food, drink, clothes, houses, cars, trips, pleasures, attractions, addictions—hides God from us. We can only see God in our lives again when the other stuff is cleared away.

Of course, we should not rejoice at economic hardship. We should not be glad that people are losing their jobs and their houses and their retirement funds. And we should never be tempted to say that somehow God is punishing them by causing financial ruin.

But we should not despair, either, or be afraid. God has already given us the greatest gift, rescuing us from the power of darkness and granting us eternal light by forgiving our sins. God is before all things and will endure after all things pass away. God holds all things together. We have to embrace an attitude of appreciation for God's love, God's care of all creation, for God's dominion over all worldly powers and rulers. And, always and everywhere, we have to give thanks, and praise, and glory to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.