

2019.08.04 homily by Fr. Gabor

In today's Gospel story Jesus points towards a history long problem of humanity, namely the problem of storing up things, accumulating things in order to satisfy a deep-seated inner hunger; the hunger of our soul, like the man in the parable of Jesus. We accumulate things that we don't need and hardly ever use; just think of your wardrobe, or house loft, or cellar or your garden shed. Some people use drinking or eating or drugs to numb their inner pain, loneliness or inner emptiness and hunger. But also think of non-material things, like always pursuing entertainment and partying, or running from one relationship to another, or idolising people who are attractive, or wasting time watching useless TV programmes or reading books that don't feed your soul. The man in the Gospel parable of Jesus symbolises all of us who want to satisfy our soul's hunger in these or other ways.

So the basic scenario that often repeats itself throughout history is this: there is a hunger for happiness in our soul, and then a voice responds to which comes from the evil one, saying: numb that hunger by accumulating things, material or non-material, like the man in the Gospel story, or be attached to things and your soul will be satisfied. The entire advertisement industry exploits this hunger of our souls and offers things that promise to satisfy it, and when you make a decision to accept these lies as truths and decide to buy into them, you end up in bondages; bondages to materials, bondages to relationships, bondages to people, addiction to alcohol, to drugs, to many other things, and eventually you always end up unsatisfied or feeling guilty.

Evil, who whispers these lies of satisfaction works in a very subtle way. He will not reveal himself and advertise himself to you saying: 'I am evil, and I am tempting you to be materialistic', because if you realise it and resist evil, it will have to run away and then your spiritual eyes would suddenly open and you would be free, but he doesn't want you to be free and see clearly. We just read St. James letter this week on Wednesday in the priest's prayer book: 'Resist the devil, and he will run away from you.'

St. Augustine suffered from the same temptations as people of every age: he was looking for something to satisfy his inner hunger, so he lived a promiscuous life, he followed popular spiritual teachers who were basically liars, but eventually he became free from all his bondages. How? By listening to the Word of God in the Cathedral of Milan during a Mass, and the teaching of St. Ambrose touched his heart and nourished His soul with something that lasted, and his spiritual eyes were suddenly opened, which led him to repent all the bondages of his sinful life, and then he rejected and renounced all the lies of the evil one as he was baptised. His soul was at last set free and ready to start to live his real life, a life as a child of God, and he also realised that our heavenly Father is real; He loves him and cares about him despite his previous sinful life.

This is when he wrote this beautiful sentence: “You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless, until they can find rest in you” (Confessions). His priorities completely turned around, and left behind his old way of life and old way of thinking and attitudes. He stopped storing up earthly pleasures.

When I first read the Gospel reading I became also very much interested in knowing what Jesus meant when he said: ‘make yourself rich in the sight of God?’

St. Paul gives us a clue. He writes in his letter to the Philippians (3:8): “I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ” (NIV). Obviously Christ becomes his greatest treasure and everything else loses its power of attraction, so much so that he is able to say in Romans 8:38-39: ‘I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.’ So Paul is rich in Christ, he needs nothing else to satisfy his soul, not even his own life.

I personally know people from Aberdeen, Edinburgh and other places who gave up the pursuit of materials; big families, who put God’s love, his Word and seeking his plans as their first priority, and decided to build up and strengthen their family and marriage bonds and the education of their children and the usage of their finances in accord with God’s plans. And God our loving heavenly Father has shown them so many times that he cares about them. My mother’s life reflects the same: she has found Christ, so she made herself poor in order to help the poor and homeless.

People of our society have stored up so many possessions and yet so many people, many families and relationships are still suffering from love starvation; wives and husbands remain hungry for true love, and still do not put their relationship as their first priority, but instead their work; thinking that having more money will satisfy the soul of their family members.

Only when you clothe yourself in Christ, as St. Paul says (in Rom 13:14), and fill your minds and hearts with the things of Heaven, and live in Him and He in you, in a heart to heart relationship, filled with the love of the Holy Spirit, will you realise how rich you are in Christ, and even more you will be seen as rich by God the Father as well, because His greatest treasure is His Son and the Holy Spirit. But for just now the way you know how much you are in Christ and the Holy Spirit is by asking yourself how much your lifestyle, your thinking and your attitude reflect His lifestyle, His thinking and His attitudes.