

“You fool, this night your life will be demanded of you... .”

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Once upon a time, years ago, a Chicago restaurant had specially, printed placemats... exclusively designed for that restaurant. If you asked your waitress, she'd give you a clean one to take home and frame... to hang on your wall if you so desired.

I now share with you the content of those placemats:

In 1923, an important meeting took place at Chicago's 'Edgewater Beach Hotel.'

Attending that meeting were the following men:

***the president of the largest steel company, the president of Bank of International Settlements.
the president of the largest utility company, the greatest wheat speculator
the president of the largest gas company, the greatest Bear on Wall Street,
the president of the N.Y. Stock Exchange, the head of the world's greatest monopoly,
and finally, a member of President Harding's cabinet.***

Now, that's a pretty impressive line-up of people!

Yet, 25 years later, --in 1948--where were those nine industrial 'giants'?

***The president of the largest steel company, Charles Schwab, died bankrupt.
The president of the largest utility company, Samuel Insull, died penniless.
The president of the largest gas company, Howard Hobson, had gone insane.
The president of the N.Y. Stock Exchange, Richard Whitney, was just released from prison.
The president of the Bank of International Settlements, Leon Fraser, died of suicide.
The greatest wheat-speculator, Arthur Cutton, died penniless.
The Wall Street 'bear,' Jesse Livermore, died of suicide.
The head of the world's largest monopoly, Ivar Kruegar, died of suicide.
The presidential cabinet member, Albert Fall, was just given a prison-pardon, to die at home.***

The story of these men's lives contains 3 bankruptcies, 3 suicides, 2 prisoners, and 1 insanity.

Their stories dramatize, as few stories can, the point behind today's scriptures, especially the Gospel, which I just read to you from St. Luke about the foolish-farmer.

*What **IS** the point behind the parable of the foolish-farmer you ask?*

Well... I am glad you asked that question!

Contrary to what some people think, in this parable, Jesus is NOT condemning the acquisition of wealth. He is NOT knocking private enterprise.

*What he **IS** knocking is the foolish idea that some people have ...of placing greater importance on laying up material treasures than laying up spiritual treasures. Jesus tells us that what counts when we die is **NOT** the wealth we acquire during life, **but** the person we become in the process of living!*

That, no doubt, sounds poetic, even a bit 'flowery,' ...so I'll put it in a more concrete fashion:

***We violate the priority of Jesus...when we acquire wealth at the expense of becoming dishonest.
We violate the priority of Jesus...when we acquire power...at the expense of becoming ruthless-
when we acquire a reputation in the community...at the expense of ignoring employees/our family.***

In short, we violate the priority Jesus speaks about... when we acquire passing treasures in this life at the expense of eternal treasures in the life to come.

I now invite you to review the priorities of your life...by answering these questions in your heart:

***If someone asked your son, “What’s your dad’s No. 1 one priority in life,” what would he say?
Would he say, “That’s easy. Dad’s No. 1 priority in life is his family!”
Or would he say something like, “Dad’s priority is... ‘the businesses or ‘his job.’ ”***

***Or, if someone asked your daughter, “What is your mother’s No. 1 priority,” what’d she say?
Would she say, “That’s easy. Mom’s No. 1 priority in life is her family.” --Or
would she say, “I’m not sure what my mother’s priority is, but it’s certainly NOT her family.”***

*Or, better yet, if someone asked your father what your priority in life was, what would he say?
Would he answer as one father did, saying:*

***I hate to admit it, but my son’s/my daughter’s No. 1 priority is ...himself/herself!
He/she isn’t interested in anything ...unless there’s something in it for him/her.***

Finally, I invite you to do one more thing. When you get the time, imagine you open the morning paper and suddenly read your own obituary! Thereby, I invite you to see yourself as others see you. I invite you to see yourself as you really are. I invite you to see yourself... as God sees you.

Or, to put it in terms of today’s Gospel, if we were to appear before Almighty God tonight... to give an account of our life, would God say to us at that moment what he said to the farmer:

***“You fool, this very night your life is demanded of you;
and the ‘things’ you have prepared
...to whom will they belong?”***

I now close with this prayer:

***“Lord, you said to your disciples, ‘what profit is there for one to gain the whole world,
yet lose or forfeit himself.’ ^{Lk.9:25}***

Help us take these words to heart.

Help us see ourselves as we... really are.

***Above all, help us see that, what counts when we lie down in death,
is not the wealth we acquired during life,***

but the person ...we became ...in the process ...of living!”

May Almighty God, our Abba, bless you... the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.