

THE EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Ecclesiastes 1: 2; 2: 21-23

Luke 12: 13-21

Colossians 3: 1-5, 9-11

1. Ecclesiastes 1: 2; 2: 21-23

- The Wisdom Books: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Wisdom, Wisdom of Ben Sir (Ecclesiasticus).
- The Hebrew name of the book is the name of its author: Qoheleth, which means a collector, an assembler (of wisdom sayings).
- The book is a reflection on the constantly changing and undependable aspects of human life, especially possessions, fame, success, or pleasure.
- The book begins and ends with a refrain: "Vanities of vanities." In Hebrew, vanity is translated a vapor or a puff of wind meaning "emptiness, futility and absurdity." Everything in human life is subject to change, to qualification and to loss.
- 1: 14 I have seen all things that are done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and a chase after wind."
- 1: 3 What profit have we from all the toil which we toil under the sun? The answer: No absolute profit or gain is possible
- The book was written when Israel was under domination of the Hellenistic kings from Egypt who were oppressive and ruthless. The average Jew would have felt a sense of helplessness and powerlessness and an inability to effect positive change or gain for self. God would have seen distant and non-communitive. The author resigns himself to the conclusion that only the gifts of God are of value.
- Ecclesiastes is most famous for the passage 3: 1-8 *There is an appointed time for everything and a time for every affair under the heavens. A time to give birth and a time to die...*
- Vv2: 21-23 A persons' hard work and labor will all be left to another after his death. The person who works hard can expect no profit or gain only sorrow and grief.
- In vv.24-26, the author makes one of his conclusions. Enjoy the simple pleasures of each day like eating and drinking and good things that come from their work because these are gifts of God. If one pleases God, he gives wisdom and knowledge and joy.

2. Luke 12: 13-21

- Remember, these events and teachings all happen as Jesus makes his way resolutely to Jerusalem.
- The parable is introduced by a person from the crowd asking Jesus to help settle a family dispute over a will. Jesus declines to be a judge and arbitrator. He calls out greed which is at the root of the family dispute.
- Jesus answers with the "Parable of the Rich Fool." The moral: One's life does not consist of possessions.

- A rich man has an abundant harvest. He presumes it will give him security for years to come. His only concern is how to store it—not how to use at least some of it for others. He is preoccupied by this concern shown by his internal monologue. He totally neglects any other values—like humanitarian or spiritual. Having solved his storage problem, he concludes that he is set for life. His preoccupation with its storage has blinded him to the fact that his wealth offers no security against the possibility of a short life. The only security consists in becoming “rich with God.”
- This parable introduces a theme that will become prominent in Luke’s Gospel from now on: Nothing is more destructive of life and humanity than preoccupation with acquiring, holding on to and increasing wealth. The problem is not the wealth itself but the attachment to it, the obsession with it, the addiction to it, that can prevent a person from giving proper attention to God and proper concern and care for fellow human beings. Wealth is a danger and not always a blessing!

3. Colossians 3: 1-5; 9-11

- If the Colossians take seriously the meaning of their baptism (that they have been saved by the risen and living Christ) and live it out in their lives, then they will not be concerned about any earthly judgement (whether they observe or do not observe Jewish practices and laws). Their minds and hearts will be focused exclusively on the Risen Lord Jesus and they will know that their life is with him. Their future is also with him when they will be revealed in glory with him.
- If they believe they have died and risen with Jesus, then they have to change their behavior. They have to put to death the earthly parts of their behavior: immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is a form of idolatry—worshipping money and possessions).
- To do otherwise is to live a lie. They have taken off the old self and have put on the new self—which is in the image of God the Creator. Therefore, they are in the image and likeness of God. Human distinctions of Jew or Gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised, slave or free have no meaning or significance. Only Christ has meaning for those who have been saved.