

# Connecting with the Sunday Readings

**Eighteenth Sunday in  
Ordinary Time**

**Gospel Word**  
Luke 12:13–21

Guard against greed. That's at the heart of today's word from Luke. But that seems to go against almost everything one hears from the surrounding culture. One hopes that all the negative talk these days about excessive greed will have an impact, but perhaps not. Contemporary society still encourages purchases of all kinds. Still, what's wrong with all that stuff? Why is it that Jesus takes a firm stand against greed? Is it about the simple accumulation of things that we can store in our expanded barns? Not really.

In contemporary terms, Jesus is warning that a preoccupation with wealth or things, often leads us to forget the essentials of why we are here and what God's gift—our life—is about. Gnawing desires for whatever we want beyond what we need causes a shift in our inner life. One's mind gets filled with thoughts and images of "the more, the bigger, the latest." Restlessness enters our spirit. We calculate how we might get it. We dream about it. We can even become obsessed with our desire. So what does that do to other concerns? What does that do to our awareness of God and other people? It's as if there is only so much room inside us and if we fill it with things and only consider what "I" want, there's no room for anyone else. Unbridled greed and self-centeredness can do this. We lose our moral compass and sometimes our conscience altogether.

This problem of greed is not just personal nor is it solely a problem for the wealthy. Our communal and personal greed can really affect others. For example, the resources of the earth are limited. So when one person takes too much, there is less for others. How often do we have to hear that a billion of our sisters and brothers on this earth do not have enough food, clean water, adequate housing, or minimum health care before we examine our own patterns of consumption to determine if there's any way we can help to alleviate this scandalous situation? We've all heard the saying that if we're not part of the solution, we are part of the problem.

## Gospel Word

In today's Gospel reading Jesus is asked to become a negotiator in a family feud. As he often does, Jesus uses the family situation as the springboard to invite his listeners to reflect more in depth about universal experiences. Here is self-centeredness and greed. Notice that in the parable of the Rich Fool that in the space of the three verses where he thinks about his future (vv. 16-19), the wealthy man refers to himself ten times without ever mentioning any other person, much less God. In introducing this parable, Jesus warned against "greed." The Greek word he used for "greed" has the implication not just as a desire for more, but of basing one's security on one's material possessions. A parable for today!

Over the last few years, it seems that there have been more conversations about the economy than anything else. For many, the condition of the economy, all the way from its global to its personal dimensions, has filled us with concern and questions. At the heart of these conversations and discussions there's a huge and difficult question that we all seem to ask, "Why?" What has caused this fiscal mess? One of the answers often given is *greed*, and of course self-centeredness. The human tendencies to greed and self-centeredness go as far back as the first humans! Thousands of years of greed show no signs of ending. If anyone thinks that the Gospels are out-dated, they haven't read this one.

## One-line Prayer

God of Goodness, help us to be satisfied with all that you have given us. Amen.