



My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

One of the phenomena I noticed about the Scriptures is that we can listen to or read the Bible regularly and not let it penetrate (like in the parable of the sower, see Matthew 13:1-23). We listen and think: "*So and so* needs to hear this." The truth is that God is speaking to us – to me – in each Scripture. If we're constantly thinking someone else needs to hear it, we will miss God's plan for us today.

I think this is true about today's Scripture. Jesus warns us today, "**Take care to guard against all greed, for though one may be rich, one's life does not consist of possessions**" (Luke 12:15). When asking people if they are greedy, I think most would say "no." To whom, then, is Jesus talking? Only the Elon Musks and Bill Gateses of the world? Yet, deep inside many of us is the temptation to greed. We justify it, we excuse it, but it is still there. The parable Jesus tells around this is about a refusal to be generous so that **I** can have more leisure, stability and ease. At heart, this self-sufficiency is a rejection of trust in God. And I would say that this is rampant in our culture, not just amongst millionaires and billionaires, but even among the middle and lower classes of our culture.

I think of how St. Teresa of Calcutta would go into shack to give the family food, and the immediate reaction of the family is to take half of it to a poor neighbor, so that both might have food. We're not so good at this. Yes, we might take part in a clothing or food drive, but very often we give the things we don't want anymore, or we buy things from our abundant surplus such that our life-style will not be affected in any way. What if we actually gave away, not that we impoverished ourselves, but that we might NOT be able to go out to dinner this weekend, or take that vacation to Disney? What if we were generous to a point where it affected us – not our basic necessities, but our leisure and ease? (By the way, know that I am preaching to myself!)

I have found that it is easy to give away when it will make me feel better – whether in time, money, or extra things. It eases my conscience to think that I have helped someone else... and yet, somehow, I still allow myself to be attached to my possessions and my comfort. Is this really fulfilling the will of God? It is easy to justify what we have, since Jesus says that "**one may be rich,**" all the while hiding in our hearts how much we really think our life does consist of possessions.

Back to St. Teresa of Calcutta: I remember reading a story about a letter she received from a young girl. The girl shared that as she was preparing to make her First Holy Communion, she told her parents not to spend money on a special dress – she would wear her school uniform – or on presents or a party. She wanted all that money to go to Mother Teresa. This young girl gave in such a way that it affected her life. Do we do that?

I think about the Franciscans of the Primitive Observance who have made the effort to return to the radical poverty of St. Francis of Assisi. They beg for their food. They do not even have a refrigerator – keeping food cold in a root cellar. They have no cars, but rely on others (or *a lot* of walking) to get from one place to another. While their life is full of hardships, it is also filled with joy. They have *nothing* and have joy; we have *stuff* and have emptiness and loneliness. Yet, we amass more things, thinking that if we just get this next thing, we'll be secure, safe, happy, satisfied (listen to Bob Rice's song "My Things Need More Things" on YouTube for a humorous take on this truth). Yet all we find is loss.

May we heed Jesus' words to each of us and become rich in what matters to God (cf. Luke 12:21).