

Notes for Next Sunday

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

The Point of this Week's Readings

Old Testament (Ecclesiastes 1:2, 12-14; 2:18-26). The key term “meaningless” occurs about 35 times in the book and only once elsewhere (Job 27:12). The Hebrew for it originally meant “breath.” It is here one minute and gone the next. The basic thrust of Ecclesiastes is that all of life is meaningless, useless, hollow, futile and vain if it is not rightly related to God. Only when based on God and his word is life worthwhile. (CSB)

Epistle (Colossians 3:1-11). The first 4 verses urge the Colossians and us that since we have been raised with Christ, we are to have our focus on things above meaning heaven. That will also elevate our behavior here on earth. In verses 5-9 Paul lists a number of behaviors that are not in line with being heavenly minded. Paul finishes the text with encouragements “to put on the new self.”

Gospel (Luke 12:13-21). This reading relates well to our OT text. Both of them end with the conclusion that to trust in earthly things like personal wealth is worthless. This text begins with a man asking Jesus to mediate between him and his brother concerning their inheritance. Jesus then launches into the parable which we know as the “Rich Young Fool.” The word “fool” is a very strong censure. It means that this person despises wisdom and instruction. Both the Pharisees and the rich fool ignore the catechesis of Jesus. (CC p. 504). This was a deadly choice.

For more in-depth commentary on each reading, read the notes found after each text below.

OLD TESTAMENT – Ecclesiastes 1:2, 12-14, 2:18-26

²“Meaningless! Meaningless!” says the Teacher. “Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.”

1:2 Briefly states the author’s theme. (CSB)

¹²I, the Teacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem. ¹³I devoted myself to study and to explore by wisdom all that is done under heaven. What a heavy burden God has laid on men! ¹⁴I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

1:12–18 Having set forth his theme that all human striving seems futile, the Teacher shows that both human endeavor and the pursuit of human wisdom are futile and meaningless. (CSB)

1:14 *chasing after the wind.* Wind can be used (e.g., in sailing ships), but never captured. People cannot master the world, lay bare its foundational secrets, or break the bonds of sin and death. Life apart from the Lord is chasing after something that cannot be captured. (TLSB)

¹⁸I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun, because I must leave them to the one who comes after me. ¹⁹And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over all the work into which I have poured my effort and skill under the sun. This too is meaningless. ²⁰So my heart began to despair over all my toilsome labor under the sun. ²¹For a man may do his work with wisdom, knowledge and skill, and then he must leave all he owns to someone who has not worked for it. This too is meaningless and a great misfortune. ²²What does a man get for all the toil and anxious striving with which he labors under the sun? ²³All his days his work is pain and grief; even at night his mind does not rest. This too is meaningless. ²⁴A man can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his work. This too, I see, is from the hand of God, ²⁵for without him, who can eat or find enjoyment? ²⁶To the man who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness, but to the sinner he gives the task of gathering and

storing up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

2:22-23 Humans cannot add a single moment to their life span (Mt 6:27; Lk 12:16–21). Disappointment is guaranteed. (TLSB)

EPISTLE – Colossians 3:1-11

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. ³ For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. ⁵ Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. ⁶ Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. ^{b 7} You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. ⁸ But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. ⁹ Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. ¹¹ Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

3:1–17 Paul begins the practical section of his Letter, based on the doctrinal section—especially Baptism (chs 1–2). (TLSB)

3:2 *earthly things*. Paul does not despise the things of the earth (1Tm 4:4). However, he realizes that this fallen world should not be our focus. (TLSB)

3:6 *wrath of God*. God is unalterably opposed to sin and will invariably make sure that it is justly punished. (CSB)

3:9–10 *taken off ... put on*. As one takes off dirty clothes and puts on clean ones, so the Christian is called upon to renounce his evil ways and live in accordance with the rules of Christ’s kingdom. (CSB)

3:11 *no Greek or Jew...uncircumcised*. In Christ, distinctions are removed, whether national (Greek and Jew), social (barbarian and Scythian), or economic (slave and free). (TLSB)

GOSPEL – Luke 12:13-21

¹³ **Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”** ¹⁴ **Jesus replied, “Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?”** ¹⁵ **Then he said to them, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”** ¹⁶ **And he told them this parable: “The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. ¹⁷ He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’** ¹⁸ **“Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹ And I’ll say to myself, “You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.”’** ²⁰ **“But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’** ²¹ **“This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God.”**

12:13 *divide the inheritance*. Dt 21:17 gave the general rule that an elder son received double a younger one’s portion. Disputes over such matters were normally settled by rabbis. This man’s request of Jesus was selfish and materialistic. There is no indication that the man had been listening seriously to what Jesus had been saying. Jesus replied with a parable about the consequences of greed. (CSB)

12:15 greed. Though greed may long lie hidden in one's heart, it eventually manifests itself in a variety of destructive behaviors. (TLSB)

12:16 produced a good crop. His abundance was not gotten by fraud or other negative means. He had simply been blessed with a very good crop. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 3)

12:17 he thought. He was reasoning or debating with himself. He had a number of options including giving the Lord or to the poor. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 3)

12:17-19 Note use of “I” and my in these verses. He totally fails to see that this is a blessing from the Lord. So, he builds more barns and keeps it for himself. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 3)

12:19 eat, drink and be merry. He forgot the part of the phrase that says “for tomorrow we die.” He was just living for himself and for the present time. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 3) Not sinful acts in themselves, but here they represent misplaced priorities and values. (TLSB)

12:20 but God said to him. God has the last word. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 3)