

Commentary on the Gospel for Mon, Aug 19th 2013

“The children of Israel offended the LORD by serving the Baals.”

“Jesus said to him, “If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

We are told that the young man had many possessions and wanted to know what good he must do to gain eternal life. Jesus sensed the trouble the young man was experiencing in his heart and how possessions were keeping him from giving himself whole-heartedly to God. “Jesus said to him, “If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

What do our possessions provide for us? Do they satisfy our desire for happiness and security? Do possessions prevent us from giving ourselves whole-heartedly to God? Do we serve our possessions [like the children of Israel serving the Baals] instead of serving the Lord? Possessions can't give us the kind of peace and happiness that we find in God. Sometimes our hope for happiness gets misplaced in materialism. Jesus challenges our attachment to earthly possessions. Jesus challenges us to contemplate what our greatest treasure is truly. The thing we most set our heart on is our highest treasure. The Lord is accessible to all, the rich and the poor. Possessions cannot provide the lasting peace and happiness that the Lord can provide. No other treasure can compare with the Lord.

This story has been on social media for a few years. Whether or not authentic, I thought it spoke well to today's readings:

An anthropologist proposed a game to the kids in an African tribe. He put a basket full of fruit near a tree and told the kids that whoever got there first won the sweet fruits. When he told them to run they all took each other's hands and ran together, then sat together enjoying their treats. When he asked them why they had run like that, as one could have had all the fruits for himself, they said: “UBUNTU: how can one of us be happy if all the other ones are sad?”

'UBUNTU' in the Xhosa culture means: “I am because we are.”

