

Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Sep 20th 2013

Memorial of St. Andrew Kim Taegon and companions [447] 1 Timothy 6:2c-12 Psalm 49:6-7, 8-10, 17-18, 19-20 Luke 8:1-3

Like many of the other reflection writers, I am a teacher. I take that responsibility very seriously. I think it's very important to make sure the students have good information and have the skills they need to continue learning when they leave my class. I also know that not all teachers take the responsibility as seriously as I do, because I often get students in my classes who have learned mis-information.

Sometimes a student will contradict my lesson saying something like, but my high school teacher said... And I have to say, sorry, your teacher was wrong. Students trust us to teach them well and give them good and accurate information. If we don't, they don't have the skills and information they need later, and they feel betrayed. Grammar rules are one thing, but how much more important is spiritual education? In the first reading we are told that it is important that people are taught correctly regarding religion. It is devastating for the people to learn wrong information, but it is also bad for the teacher – who should know better.

Religion, for the teacher and the learner, is about spiritual, not material gain. I've heard televangelists talk about giving to charity (usually their own church), not as a spiritual gift but as an investment strategy. If the good we do is returned tenfold, then for every dollar you give to charity (perhaps to this preacher's megachurch) you would get ten back. That's a way better rate than you could get at the bank or in the stock market. But almsgiving is not about return on investment.

The spiritual gain is the point, not the monetary gain. We can't take it with us, and we can't buy our way to heaven. We need to do good works because it's the right thing to do, not because we expect to be handsomely paid for them. Money can't buy you love. Money can't buy you God. And anyone who tells you otherwise is a bad teacher.

Tami Whitney