

Commentary on the Gospel for Wed, Sep 13th 2017

Memorial of Saint John Chrysostom, Bishop and Doctor of the Church

People working in organizations and communities often look for guidance in a strategic plan. Individuals look for goals, actions and activities that they can use as a template and they very often yearn for a plan in which they can see themselves.

As I reflected on the first reading from Colossians and the Gospel reading from Luke I was struck by how much both readings address these ideals of strategic planning. In the first reading, if the goal is represented by the verse “If you were raised with Christ, seek what is above,” then seeking God means putting to death our earthly inclinations “immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire and the greed that is idolatry “. In addition, the teacher goes on to encourage renewal by having us putting away “anger, fury, malice, slander and obscene language” and to “stop lying to one another”. These specific actions (one might say “tactics” in the language of strategic planning) are in pursuit of the higher goal of seeking what is above. As with a strategic plan, our daily lives in seeking God are built on the building block of small individual actions that open us up to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and grace to work in support of God’s plan.

Luke’s Gospel is very familiar to us and we try I think to see who we are in the context of the parable. I have so often read the Beatitudes, and always focused on the warning and admonition inherent in the latter verses (‘woe to you.....who are rich, who are filled now, who laugh now’). We should realize that Jesus also knows that even the most successful of his followers, people of great spiritual depth and who are humble in life successes will also weep and will be hated and excluded for proclaiming Jesus as Lord.

Regardless of our station in this life, we are all part of God’s strategic plan and can indeed find ourselves in that plan. We have the blueprint for becoming sensitive to what that may be by putting aside our earthly inclinations—in fact becoming indifferent and detached from those chains of the world that bind us—and finally hearing the Holy Spirit revealing to us our unique role in God’s plan.

Mark Latta-Creighton University's School of Dentistry