

Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, Nov 10th 2018

Memorial of Saint Leo the Great, Pope and Doctor of the church

Recently I participated in a workshop that afforded me a chance to explore and reflect upon what I hold near and dear. One of the exercises during the workshop was a repeated-question exercise where for five minutes my partner asked me: “What is hard for you to give away?” After each of my responses she simply replied “You are loved” and then she repeated the question. This simple, but profound experience has stayed with me. And it seems to be a frame for today’s readings.

In Paul’s letter to the Philippians, Paul states the assurance: “My God will fully supply whatever you need, in accord with his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.” We can so often be lead to a false sense of scarcity so this reminder that we have all that we need is such a gift. The Philippians had explored the question “What is hard for me to give away” and met that challenge in fidelity to Paul.

Paul expresses his gratitude to the Philippians for their care, concern and generosity as he writes to the community from prison. He reminds us that he has the strength to face anything because of his faith in God. And although he is so confident in that abiding faith, he is also grateful for the empathy shown as people let him know they shared his distress. He expressly thanks the Philippians for the gifts they shared when he was with them and after he left their community. And we are reminded that the gratitude is not just for their gifts but for the joy he feels knowing they in turn pleased God.

In today’s gospel from Luke, Jesus challenges us, and the Pharisees, about our relationship to money. While money can be necessary to provide for our basic needs of food, clothing and shelter, we can so easily become disordered in our relationship to money. Money can very easily become “what I find hard to give away.” Sure it can be easy to give money away to important causes or to delight my young adult daughters with a treat. But if I am honest with myself, as the exercise in the workshop was inviting me to be, I can cling to money out of a fear that manifests as a lack of trust in God’s love.

Today’s readings invite me to ask myself in prayer: When do I show generosity in service to God? How can I share the many blessings in my life? Can I allow myself to trust that God will supply whatever I need? Jesus clearly teaches: “No servant can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. “

What do you find hard to give away?

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