

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

August 3, 2025

**Seek what is above.**

**Vanity of vanities.**

**Guard against all greed.**

**-rvb**

Reading 1

Ecclesiastes 1:2; 2:21-23

**Vanity of vanities, says Qoheleth,  
vanity of vanities! All things are vanity!**

Here is one who has labored with wisdom and knowledge and skill,  
and yet to another who has not labored over it,  
he must leave property.

This also is vanity and a great misfortune.

For what profit comes to man from all the toil and anxiety of heart  
with which he has labored under the sun?

All his days sorrow and grief are his occupation;  
even at night his mind is not at rest.

**This also is vanity.**

**A reflection, exegesis, and commentary on the scriptures**

Ecclesiastes, (“Preacher,” “Assembler,” or “Convenor,”) also known as Quoheleth, continues the critical appraisal of human nature and the human condition. “Life is a bummer” and this theme is repeated at the end of the book, 12:8. When all is said and done, life

and possessions are like a breath on a frosty winter morning. We spend one third of our lives working, a third sleeping, and a third seeking those fleeting moments of meaning, direction, purpose, and fulfillment. You work hard most of your adult life, saving a neat and secure nest egg for retirement, (or as I like to term it as transitioning) and suddenly you die. While this section of the reading sounds very pessimistic, the author does conclude that we should enjoy the now and share our talents and knowledge and gifts of the earth for our happiness, pleasure, and fulfillment. “Yesterday is history, tomorrow is mystery and today is a gift.” (The newspaper comic strip “The Family Circus” by Bill Keane, published on August 31, 1994, contained this wisdom: “Yesterday is the past, tomorrow’s the future, but today is a GIFT. That is why it is called the present.”). Be present in the presence of God. The next message we need from God is right where we are in the “hic et nunc” (here and now).

The word “vanity” means “emptiness,” and comes from the root, “to exhale or to evaporate.” Hence the idea of vapor is expressed, suggesting something transient, fleeting, and unsubstantial. This argues the ultimate unhappiness of earthly possessions. Apart from our pursuits in life, there is nothing but the emptiness of human life;

the unsatisfying worldly pleasures; the profitless outcome of worldly pursuits; and the uncertainty as to whether the best human prudence and wisdom can secure real and lasting happiness.

According to Greek mythology and the singer, Carley Simon we are offered a similar, yet different ancient and modern insights of “vanities of vanities” from the perspective of egocentrism, self-centeredness, and narcissism.

### **Greek Mythology -Narcissus and the Reflecting Pool**

One fateful day, after rejecting countless admirers, a voice (Echo's) whispered, “May he fall in love with himself and never obtain his desire.” And so, Narcissus came upon a clear, still pool of water. As he bent down to drink, he saw his reflection and was instantly captivated. Unable to tear himself away from his image and realizing he was in love with himself, he fell into despair. He remained by the pool, gazing at his reflection until he transformed into the flower that now bears his name.

And the song, “You’re so vain, you probably think this song is about you” by Carly Simon.

“You are so vain, you think this song is about you.

You walked into the party.

Like you were walking on a yacht  
Your hat strategically dipped below one eye  
Your scarf, it was apricot.  
You had one eye on the mirror.  
As you watched yourself Gavotte,  
And all the girls dreamed that they'd be your partner.  
They would be your partner, and You're so vain.  
You probably think this song is about you.  
You're so vain, I'll bet you think this song is about you.  
Don't you?  
Don't you?"  
“**This also is vanity.**”

#### Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 90:3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 14 and 17

R. **(1) If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.**  
You turn man back to dust,  
saying, “Return, O children of men.”  
For a thousand years in your sight  
are as yesterday, now that it is past,  
or as a watch of the night.  
R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.  
You make an end of them in their sleep;  
the next morning they are like the changing grass,  
Which at dawn springs up anew,  
but by evening wilts and fades.  
R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.  
Teach us to number our days aright,  
that we may gain wisdom of heart.

**Return, O LORD! How long?**

**Have pity on your servants!**

**R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.**

**Fill us at daybreak with your kindness,**

**that we may shout for joy and gladness all our days.**

**And may the gracious care of the LORD our God be ours;**

**prosper the work of our hands for us!**

**Prosper the work of our hands!**

**R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.**

## **Reading 2**

### **Colossians 3:1-5, 9-11**

**Brothers and sisters:**

**If you were raised with Christ, seek what is above,  
where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.**

**Think of what is above, not of what is on earth.**

**For you have died,**

**and your life is hidden with Christ in God.**

**When Christ your life appears,**

**then you too will appear with him in glory.**

**Put to death, then, the parts of you that are earthly:**

**immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire,**

**and the greed that is idolatry.**

**Stop lying to one another,**

**since you have taken off the old self with its practices**

**and have put on the new self,**

**which is being renewed, for knowledge,**

**in the image of its creator.**

**Here there is not Greek and Jew,**

**circumcision and uncircumcision,**

**barbarian, Scythian, slave, free;**

**but Christ is all and in all.**

## **A reflection, exegesis, and commentary on the scriptures.**

**Paul highlights the theme of Ecclesiastes as he encourages the community to “Think of what is above, not of what is on earth.” Henry Thoreau shares this insight, “Superfluous wealth can buy superfluities only. Money is not required to buy one necessity of the soul.” Remaining consciously and lovingly in the presence of Jesus makes for a meaningful, fulfilling, and happy life. Paul concludes his letter that genuine and authentic existence is in Jesus, and not in the superficial and external material possessions of life. Do not slip back to the former ways of life which we believed gave us security, stability, and fulfillment. Because of our baptism into Jesus Christ, all possessions pale by comparison. The Quaker spiritual writer, John Woolman says, “Christ’s example teaches us to be content with things really necessary, and to avoid all superfluities, and give up our hearts to simplicity and humility, and to serve the Lord.”**

**Alleluia**

**[Matthew 5:3](#)**

**R. Alleluia, alleluia.**

**Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

**R. Alleluia, alleluia.**

**Gospel**

### Luke 12:13-21

Someone in the crowd said to Jesus,  
“Teacher, tell my brother to share the inheritance with me.”  
He replied to him,  
“Friend, who appointed me as your judge and arbitrator?”  
Then he said to the crowd,  
“Take care to guard against all greed,  
for though one may be rich,  
one’s life does not consist of possessions.”

Then he told them a parable.  
“There was a rich man whose land produced a bountiful harvest.  
He asked himself, ‘What shall I do,  
for I do not have space to store **my harvest?**’  
And he said, ‘This is what I shall do:  
I shall tear down **my barns** and build larger ones.  
There I shall store all **my grain** and other goods  
and I shall say to myself, “Now as for you,  
you have so many good things stored up for many years,  
rest, eat, drink, be merry!”’  
But God said to him,  
‘You fool, this night **your life will be demanded of you;**  
and the things you have prepared, to whom will they belong?’  
Thus will it be for all who store up treasure for themselves  
but are not rich in what matters to God.”

**A reflection, exegesis, and commentary on the scriptures.**

Albert Schweitzer gave up careers in music and in theology to become a missionary doctor in Africa. He was a rich man, and Africa was poor. He said, “Whatever benefits we confer upon the people of our colonies, is not beneficence, but atonement for the terrible sufferings which we white people have been imposing upon them since the day on which the first of

our ships found the way to their shores.” We hear the faint and haunting echo of St. Ambrose, “You are not making a gift of your possessions to the poor; you are handing over to them what is theirs, for what has been given in common for the use of all, you have taken for yourself. The world is given to all, not only to the rich.”

Schweitzer was aware of today’s Gospel message. He chose to live simply so that others might simply live. Material possessions do not guarantee real life and happiness, rather the Gospel challenges us to seek union with God. Wealth can become an obstacle to our salvation. We become addicted to success, work, wealth, and filling not our barns, but as I drive around the city, I notice the garages are bulging with more “stuff” and no place to park the car(s), and I am sure closets are “clothed out.” The man in this reading is on an ego-trip. He speaks of “my barns,” “my grain,” “my harvest,” and “my soul”- **“You fool, this night your life will be demanded of you.”** He lacks the concept of community where we are challenged to share from our essence and our surplus – “We have enough for everyone’s need, but not everyone’s greed.” – Gandhi. We are to be stewards of the gifts, talents, and wealth we have been blessed with. This heart of ours is returned to God when our charity and love shared with



others. This is true and authentic life with God. As the Quaker, spiritual writer John Woolman expressed it: “Through the mercies of the Almighty, I had in good degree learned to be content with a plain way of living.” Possessions do not bring about the reign of God.

Finally, the rich fool did not live his life in reference to God. The greedy man suffocated himself in trying to possess and accumulate more goods in his insatiable quest for meaning, fulfillment, satisfaction, and happiness. He did not realize he could not take anything with him, but his love for others and his relationship with God. However, he had neither of these because he was too preoccupied with himself and his possessions. Instead of having everything, he had nothing. The time is now to prune your garages and closets!

**Final prayer:** In the spirit of today’s readings, let us take inventory of our lives, probing into the deepest dimensions of our hearts, minds, and souls to discover our priorities. Life is not a bummer. It is “in living that we die, and it is dying to self that we achieve eternal life.”

Roger J. Vanden Busch