

XV Trinity 2024
Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish
Father Craig Looney
St. Matthew 6.24-34



We cannot serve both God and money...we will hate one and love the other. Where is our love?

In the 1963 movie *Lilies of the Field*, a group of nuns barely surviving in the Arizona desert desperately want to build a chapel. Mother Superior worries about who can build the chapel.

Along comes Homer Smith, an itinerant worker, played by veteran actor Sydney Poitier. He offers to help the nuns build their chapel. He hopes to earn some money in the process. He worries about how to get the chapel built.

Against all odds, Homer succeeds in getting local builders to donate the material needed to build the chapel. Men from the community supply the labor. The nuns have their beautiful new chapel...and it didn't cost them one dollar!

Homer comes to realize when the work is done...there will be no paycheck. The nuns have no money to give him. He also knows it doesn't matter. What he did for the nuns turned into a labor of love. That was far better than any paycheck. Homer drives off in his station wagon, while the nuns sing the Gospel song "Amen" (that's AY-men, not AH-men).

In this morning's Gospel, Jesus tells us not to worry so much about material things because when we worry we are really saying we don't trust God. Jesus tells the little story about flowers growing in a field. Flowers don't worry too much. Well, flowers don't know they are flowers. But God provides the rain and the sun they need to grow.

If God takes care of the flowers he created for us to enjoy, aren't we more important than the flowers? Doesn't he take care of our material needs as well as our spiritual needs? The answer is yes, he does!

Mammon is a word used in the Bible for *material* things. Material things include our

money, our clothes, our food, our homes, and everything else we possess. We have all heard people say, "The Bible says money is the root of all evil". Wrong! Money itself is not evil.

In Ecclesiastes (5.10) we are told the "love" of money is the root of all evil. The person who loves money can never have enough. He will always want more. Proverbs (23.4-5) tells us we should not to spend so much time trying to become wealthy. Our wealth is only temporary. Whatever we set our eyes on will soon be gone.

Material things aren't bad things. God gives us material things because he wants us to have them. We need money to buy things: clothes to keep warm, food to stay healthy and strong, and homes to live in. Jesus isn't saying we shouldn't have money or buy clothes or food or want nice homes to live in. He is asking us not to worry so much about our material needs and trust in God to provide us with what we need, not necessarily what we want.

We all worry about something at one time or another in our lives. We worry about the cost of living, homelessness, violence, wars and disease. "Don't Worry, Be Happy" is the title of the 1988 song by Bobby McFerrin. That's sometimes easier said (or sung) than done.

In the Collect we are asking God to keep us from things that hurt us and from the things that distract us and make us worry too much. We're asking him to lead us to *profitable* things.

Profitable in the Collect doesn't mean money or other material possessions. *Profitable* means our love for God and for others increases every day of our lives. We're asking God to help us always do what is right. We're placing our trust in God's love and mercy. We believe he knows what we need and that he can and will take care of our material needs.

When we do what the Collect says we are showing our love for God and using the material things he has given us according to his wishes and with thanks and praise.

