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Saturday's Gospel: Seeking the Highest Goods

Gospel for Saturday in the 31st
Week of Ordinary Time, and
commentary.

Gospel (*Lk 16:9-15*)

And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal habitations.

“He who is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and he who is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. If then you have not

been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will entrust to you the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all this, and they scoffed at him. But he said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts; for what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.”

Commentary

The words of the Gospel for today's Mass are in part an application of the parable in yesterday's Gospel, although the entire Gospel of Luke gives the context needed to understand them fully. On the one hand, the disciples are encouraged to act with the wisdom that is reflected, although imperfectly, in the astuteness of those who function only by human calculations. The expression "unrighteous mammon" refers to wealth unrelated to the desire for true righteousness. Jesus asks us to seriously strive to attain what we say we want to attain, putting everything else at the service of that goal: our eternal dwelling place. Therefore it is a matter of learning to discern how to correctly use material goods.

This exhortation is followed by two more, which are also related to other passages in Luke. The responsible steward is the one who pays

attention to what is small, because that is often where ruin can begin. It is in what is little, what is small, where true interest and love are shown. This passage also tells us that we will not be able to manage eternal goods well if we have not known how to do so with transitory goods. Aspiring to heaven does not mean ignoring the world. These teachings can be summarized in this phrase: “you cannot serve God and riches.” That is, if what motivates our actions is money, God is left out of our life.

Jesus’ final words today put us on notice. The Pharisees listening to Jesus were “lovers of money” (Lk 16:14), and he saw into their hearts. For what is the value of the alms of a miser or a covetous person? It is God’s judgment that truly matters. The positive judgment of us by others will be of little use to us if our interior reality is different. Jesus encourages us to purify our heart

and renew our mind, to examine our desires and intentions, because it is from the heart that good and bad deeds come.

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