

Homily by Fr. Robin CRM– 18th Sunday in Ordinary Time (3 August 2025)

Readings: Ecclesiastes 1:2; 2:21–23; Colossians 3:1–5, 9–11; Luke 12:13–21

1. Introduction: Vanity and the Search for Meaning

Our readings today begin with a stark word from Ecclesiastes: *“Vanity of vanities... all is vanity!”* (Ecc 1:2). The Hebrew word “hebel” means breath, vapor, something fleeting and unsubstantial. The Preacher is not saying that life is meaningless, but that life without God—when centered only on earthly gain—is fleeting and empty.

St. Augustine understood this well when he prayed: *“You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.”*

2. First Reading: The Futility of Possessions Without God

In Ecclesiastes 2:21–23, the writer laments that a person may work with wisdom and knowledge, yet must leave everything to another who did not toil for it. This is not a rejection of work—it is a warning that when our identity and security are built solely on possessions, we will be disappointed.

Modern theologian N. T. Wright comments:

“The danger is that we make good things into ultimate things, turning them into idols that cannot give life.”

3. Second Reading: Seek What Is Above

In Colossians 3:1–5, 9–11, Paul gives the antidote to vanity: *“Seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.”*

Paul uses baptismal language: having “died” with Christ, we are to put to death earthly desires that lead to sin—greed, impurity, idolatry. Here greed is named as idolatry because it replaces trust in God with trust in wealth.

St. John Chrysostom explains:

“Greed is insatiable; the more we acquire, the more we desire. But Christ teaches us to be rich toward God, not toward our own storehouses.”

4. Gospel: The Parable of the Rich Fool

In Luke 12:13–21, Jesus responds to a man who asks Him to settle an inheritance dispute. Instead of arbitrating, Jesus warns against all greed and tells the parable of the rich fool.

The man in the parable is not called foolish because he is rich, but because he is self-centered and blind to eternity. Notice his repeated words: *“my crops...”*

my barns... my grain... my goods... my soul." He never once mentions God or others. His life is about possession, not relationship.

Origen, commenting on this passage, says:

"The rich man's problem was not the size of his harvest, but the smallness of his heart."

5. Vanity, New Life, True Wealth

The readings form a clear movement:

- Ecclesiastes warns that earthly pursuits are fleeting.
- Colossians directs us to set our hearts on heaven.
- Luke gives us a parable showing the danger of ignoring eternity.

The thread is that life without God's perspective becomes a trap of vanity. Real wealth is measured by being "rich toward God" (Lk 12:21).

Pope Benedict XVI reflects:

"Possessions are not bad in themselves, but when they possess us, they chain our hearts to earth, preventing us from soaring toward heaven."

6. Practical Application: Being Rich Toward God

How can we live this out?

- Detach from greed – Use possessions as tools, not as sources of identity.
- Invest in what lasts – Faith, love, generosity, and mercy are treasures that endure (cf. Mt 6:20).
- Seek the things above – As Paul says, let our priorities, decisions, and actions be shaped by heaven's values, not just earthly gain.

7. Conclusion

The man in the parable died with full barns but an empty soul. Our goal is the opposite—to have a heart full of grace, even if our barns are modest.

Let us remember the words of St. Gregory the Great:

"When we care for the needs of the poor, we are giving what is ours; when we care for their needs out of love, we are giving what is God's."

May we live not in the vanity of chasing fleeting wealth, but in the joy of seeking the treasure that never fades—life in Christ.

Amen.