

Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Sep 18th 2015

Today's first reading is on the longer side, for a first reading. It follows readings from the three previous days and is followed by one more tomorrow, all taken from 1 Timothy, which consists of St. Paul's exhortations to Timothy on how to shepherd his early Christian community. The oft-quoted "For the love of money is the root of all evils" is verse 10; likewise, the proverbial "For we brought nothing into the world, just as we shall not be able to take anything out of it," is verse 7.

The wisdom presented here is palpable and is just as applicable to our lives today as it was 2,000 years ago. My favorite verse is "If we have food and clothing, we shall be content with that." So much truth and fodder for reflection lie in that one statement.

I might add a couple more "basics" to the list of essential needs, including shelter and education. But the point is, so much of what we think we need does not really add to our lives. In fact, always wanting the latest, the newest, the best, the smartest, the fastest, is really a losing proposition. As this letter to Timothy states, "Those who want to be rich are falling into temptation and into a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge them into ruin and destruction."

To seek riches for their own sake, to desire to "be" rich in order to be able to have whatever we might possibly want, truly is a trap. We can never be satisfied and our lives will be dominated by the all-consuming continuous cycle, much like the hamster on the wheel.

On the other hand, if we find that money comes our way through hard work and using our God-given skills, that is something else. The money, or "riches," was not the goal; rather, it was the work itself, the labor of love for other reasons, including often improving the lives of others.

This first letter to Timothy doesn't leave us with only a list of "what not to do" statements. In verses 11-12, Timothy is told: "Instead, pursue righteousness, devotion, faith, love, patience and gentleness. Compete well for the faith. Lay hold of eternal life, to which you were called when you made the noble confession in the presence of many witnesses."

Being a Christian IS different. Our eyes are on a different prize than the world's. We can't be reminded of that too often.

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