

08/04/13 ..... 18 C

*Judaism, Christianity and Islam all affirm the right of individual ownership and private property, but there are moral limits imposed on absolute private ownership....The notion that 'it is all mine' is a violation of these teachings and traditions.*

-- Does this sound like a passage from a Church document, or a quote from a socialist-leaning politician? Actually it is neither of these. These words come from the mouth of Bill Gates, one of the richest men in the world.

-- When we hear the parable of the rich landowner, some think Jesus is being hard on him for accumulating wealth, or for building bigger barns. In fact, neither of these is his problem. There's no evidence he cheated to get rich, or that he exploited the poor.

-- The problem is in his attitude, and we can see the evidence of that in his "internal dialogue." Notice what is repeated: What shall I do... I will say to my soul...**you** have so many good things. He fell victim to the "unholy trinity" of me, myself and I.

-- In this case, the alternate translation is much better and more literal. (NRSV) Instead of *I shall say to myself, "and as for you..."* the better translation is *I shall say to my **soul**, "**Soul**, you have ample goods..."* It conveys the meaning accurately.

-- The rich man's problem was that he thought earthly riches would satisfy his soul. Of course, that's not true. Most of us know that, whether we are in the top 1%, the middle class, or are struggling to survive economically. At least we know it intellectually.

-- As the Old Testament wisdom writer we heard in our first reading tells us, we can't take it with us. When we die, there will be no distinction between Bill Gates, Warren Buffett and the rest of us.

-- Yet, as much as we know this intellectually, how do our actions match this knowledge? Why are so many more people playing the lottery when the grand prize is 100 million as opposed to 4 million? Why do people choose to be away from their family constantly in order to make

enough money to have a million dollar house instead of a nice 200 thousand dollar home?

-- Why was it such a headline when pro golfer Hunter Mahan withdrew from the Canadian Open last week when he was leading in order to get home for his child's premature birth? Shouldn't we take such a thing for granted?

-- Yes, relationships are more important than things, but we need to be reminded of that again and again. When we die, God won't ask us how much money we made or how big of a house we had.

-- God will ask us if we cared for and loved our family, contributed to our community and treated people fairly. He will determine whether or not we value the things that really matter.

-- In the end, all wealth we have is not ours but is given to us in trust by God. There is a spiritual element to what we do with the wealth God has given us—not just money, but time and talent as well.

-- The poor rich man in the gospel did not get that. He thought that his very soul was satisfied by the productivity of his fields.

-- There's nothing wrong with making money, even in large amounts. But we can't allow it to rule us. For, in the end, where will all that accumulated stuff go? We can't take it with us into heaven—that we know for sure!