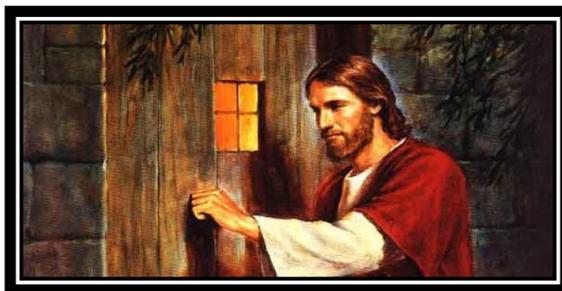


## Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

St. Julian of Norwich once characterized sin as "the creeping in of the immediate." In other words, sin is sneaky and deceitful; it promises immediate gratification and thereby catches our appeal, yet at the same time its ultimate end is spiritual death — "the wages of sin is death." In this week's Gospel (Luke 12:32-48), Jesus warns us to "Be on guard." He teaches us that we must keep our attention focused on the ultimate end or purpose of our lives. We all know that to become good holy people we often need to forsake immediate gratification in favor of what is best in the long run. In order to guard ourselves from sin, Jesus invites us to consider two metaphors:

- 1) **"Sell what you have and give alms. Get purses for yourselves that do not wear out, a never-failing treasure with the Lord which no thief comes near nor any moth destroys. Wherever your treasure lies, there your heart will be."**
- 2) **"Let your belts be fastened around your waists and your lamps be burning ready."**



So, we need to get purses that do not wear out and we need to keep our lamps burning. What does this mean?

We cannot buy our way into heaven, but the way we use our money will have eternal consequences. Jesus challenges us to consider: are we using our money, our "purses", to be a blessing to others and to promote the Kingdom of God, or do we spend our treasures on things which will "wear out" — which will only provide immediate gratification at the expense of what is best in the long run? When we spend our money on noble purposes, we get purses for ourselves that do not wear out — a "never-failing treasure with the Lord."

In order to guard against the deceitfulness of sin, we must be able to see beyond immediate gratification and somehow pursue and surrender to the ultimate Good: the will of God. This can only be accomplished by faith. The Second Reading in today's liturgy defines faith as the "confident assurance concerning what we hope for, and conviction about things we do not see" (Heb 11:1-2). Without faith it is impossible to please God. Faith is like a burning lamp because it provides light to the mind and heart whereby we can see what is truly pleasing to God. Without the light of faith we remain in darkness and become slaves of sin.

My friends, we all need to be ready to meet God; we must "be on guard." If we want to have treasure in heaven we must have our hearts in the right place here on earth: where our treasure is indicates where our heart is. We cannot please God unless our lamps are burning, i.e., unless we are living by faith. We cannot buy faith, but we must cultivate it by study and prayer. Every day we need to "light our lamps" so we can see clearly and defend ourselves from spiritual death—from "the creeping in of the immediate." In summary, Jesus is right (surprise! surprise!), we need to get purses that do not wear out and keep our lamps burning ready.

*Your Servant in Christ, Fr. Terry Staples*

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