

I NEED A BIGGER BARN; I WANT A BIGGER BARN.

The death of our last parent almost always brings with it great emotions. The death sometimes brings out the best in people and sometimes it brings out the worst. Especially if there is an estate or monies or possessions. I have seen sisters turn on each other. I have seen parents exclude certain of their children. I have seen a brother cheat his brother and sister out of money. I have seen homes stolen by clever legal maneuvers. I have seen children walk out on the reading of the will when it was clear that they were not going to receive all that they expected. People are capable of very base, mean and dishonest deeds especially where money is concerned—and expectations are high.

“Master, tell my brother to share the inheritance with me.” Jesus is asked to intervene on behalf of a person he does not know who is claiming he is being treated unfairly. He is not getting what he believes he is entitled to. We call that an attitude of entitlement. It is very common in life. Jesus chooses not to get involved in that situation. Jesus also uses the opportunity to give a teaching about greed in our lives. He says simply: “Avoid greed. In all its forms.” And greed can take many forms.

Basically, greed is the inordinate desire for more. More what? Fill in the blank. More of anything or of everything. Jesus tells a story about a rich man with an enormous harvest. More than he can sell or use. What to do? Build a bigger barn and store up the excess grain for himself for the future and then rest content. Notice: There is no sharing. No looking around to see who is in need. No assessing situations to offer assistance. No. His thinking is centered on himself. “I need a bigger barn. I want a bigger barn.” What is never said but which is understood are these words: “For me.” “I want a bigger barn for me. I want more for me.” More. There is an addictive dimension here. Always wanting more. Not ever being satisfied or content or happy with what I have.

We don’t even see our own greed many times. We don’t see that our wanting more is a craving, a compulsion, an uncontrolled desire. This greed is the root of every addiction. We don’t recognize our wanting more as a kind of coveting of what the other person has. The Old Testament author of our first reading is an old but wise sage. He has personally “seen it all and done it all.” He has come to realize that living that way is useless and will not bring happiness.

Paul, in the second reading, gives some counsel. “Seek what is above.” Seek the things of God’s kingdom. Seek the things that do not end. Seek the things that last. Don’t spend all your time trying to get more of that which doesn’t last and you cannot take with you. Seek that which you can take with you into the kingdom. What is that? You take with you in God’s kingdom all that you have given away and shared with others. You take with you your sacrifices, your virtues. You take with you who you really are without any pretenses. These things truly last.

And what does Jesus offer? He says that each person is offered forgiveness for their sins. And full and complete access to intimacy with the Heavenly Father. He offers us the Kingdom of Heaven beginning here but for all eternity. BUT only that. My friends, each of us will face the Lord one day and he will ask us: What has your life been about? What is the meaning of your life? What will I point to? What will you point to? What will we be able to bring with us to show Him? I will tell you what it isn’t. It isn’t a Selfie of me and my new bigger barn.