

WE ARE MEANT TO BE INSPIRED
18th Sunday in OT: July 31, 2022
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Several years back, I deleted my Facebook, Twitter and Linked-In social media accounts. While I liked keeping up with family, friends and former military buddies, I found the majority of general posts to be mean, negative and sometimes just plain ole' cruel. Oh, I know there's some good stuff but, for me, the right thing was to do away with them. So... I was a little skeptical when my daughter Abbey encouraged me to try Tik Tok. Now, if you're not familiar with it, Tik Tok is a video sharing app. People can upload 15-second to 10-minute videos. It is available in over 40 different languages and boasts over one billion active users. With such a huge platform, there is most certainly a shady, dark side – even our government dislikes Tik Tok because it is owned by a Chinese company. However, I usually get a laugh out of viewing the practical jokes or a warm feeling by watching peoples' pet videos. Now, what does Tik Tok have to do our readings from St. Luke and St. Paul? Well,

all *three* of our readings today are warnings. Warnings against storing up earthly possessions when we should be acting in a Godly way. That brings me to my favorite kinds of Tik Tok videos... the ones where someone secretly pays for another's groceries... the ones where a passerby slips an uplifting note into the hand of a woman pumping gas... and, probably the most moving to me, those Good Samaritans who stop to visit with a homeless person giving them a few dollars and some food. A cameraman is hidden and secretly films the homeless person who almost always moved to tears by these simple gestures of kindness, respect and generosity... it touches my heart to see such good and it inspires me to do the same.

In Jesus' parable today we find a rich man, who unlike the modern Tik Tok Samaritans, is focused solely on himself. Notice the words... "What shall I do" repeated five times! My riches. My barns. My grain. I have so many things stored for the next few years, it's time to rest, eat, drink and be merry. It's all me, me, me and I, I, I. That night, the man is dead and all that stuff, all that earthly stuff... it means nothing...

one may wonder, “I what was in the man’s spiritual barn, if he even had one?”

Now, I’d like to say right here, many of us have been blessed with nice things... we’ve work hard for that pretty car, warm home and that tasty food on the table. There is absolutely nothing wrong with that but we should, must, recognize that these blessings, as we call them, are exactly that, blessings. Everything we have in this world is a gift from God... the rich man in Jesus’ parable couldn’t see that... he was focused only on himself and his life now... it was all about me, myself and I. He didn’t consult God on what he should do with the great bounty given to him... he asked himself, “What shall I do?” When we receive a gift from God, it just that, a gift, a gift meant to be shared... whatever that gift may be... money, time, patience or talent at something, plumbing, teaching, singing. When we share our gifts, we are blessed again by God... we call this, “The loop of grace.”

St. Paul tells us, “Think of what is above, not of what is on earth.” Just as Jesus tells us to be “rich in what matters to God.” And, what

matters to God? In our hearts, I believe that we know the answer to that question.

As I get older, I find myself thinking more and more about the things my mother treasured while she was alive. Almost exclusively, it was family... she was always delighted when me or one of my siblings stopped by... and even more excited if we had the grandkids. For birthdays and the holidays, she wanted nothing more than to be surrounded by family and friends... the ones she loved and those who loved her. It seems the older I get, the less stuff I want or need, and the more I just wanted to be around kind, caring, loving people.

The message in my rather short homily is quite simple. Be thankful for the earthly things that God has given us... consult him on how best to share those gifts... use what you have to make a positive difference in someone else's life. Think of scripture as the Tik Tok of Jesus' time and... like then as now, be inspired to store up what God considers riches... kindness, generosity, patience, forgiveness and most of all, love.