

Homily – Let Go, Let God

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For many of us, money is not something that we have learned about from Jesus.

Two thousand years ago, Jesus had a lot to say about money and possessions, but for most of us, me included, we have learned about money from our families and from American culture.

Today's Gospel reading begins with, *"Jesus said to his disciples, "Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."*

Isn't that something that you want? Don't you want to be a little less afraid in your daily life? Don't you want a world that matches a little more to the wonders of God's kingdom.

Some say the kingdom of God is what happens only after we die, but Jesus is quite explicit. The kingdom of God is to be here and now. Yes, it is after death, but the kingdom is also around us in this life time.

God created us for the kingdom. Though we often move in the wrong direction, it is God's good pleasure to give us the kingdom. And, when we trust in God's eternal and unchanging love for each and every one of us, then we bring God's kingdom more and more into focus in a world that sorely needs the kingdom. What are you willing to do to bring God's kingdom into focus?

Now, in this morning's Gospel reading Jesus is quite unambiguous about what we need to do to reduce our fears and accept the kingdom. We must sell our possessions and give the proceeds of the sale to the poor. We have people all around us here in the South County who need food, housing, and medical care. We can't deny there is a need, and Jesus tells us to give our money away to those that need it more than we do. *"Sell your possessions,*

and give alms.” By the way, for those of you that don’t know, alms is a word that isn’t used very much anymore. It means giving food or money to poor people.

In my own spiritual journey, I want to reduce fear. And, I want to bring God’s kingdom into this world. But, I have not been willing to give away my money. Like many of you, the major source of my value of money is from our American culture and not from Jesus. Our society says that one never has enough money. We prize consuming as much as possible. We emphasize getting a bigger piece of the pie. We idolize the rich, and we dismiss the poor as being less than.

And, as I embrace what society has taught me about money then I slide passed God’s good pleasure for me to fear less. And, I miss living into the kingdom of God.

Aren’t you glad you came to church today. *“Sell your possessions, and give alms.”* Next time you might look in advance at the weekly Sunday morning Bible readings and skip the Sunday that might have a sermon about money.

For, this is tough stuff that we often don’t want to hear about, but Jesus had a lot to say about money. And, I continue to believe that for Americans money and possessions are the biggest barriers to a healthy spiritual life. We cannot be in healthy relationship with God, other, and self if we ignore the teachings of Jesus about money. *“Sell your possessions, and give alms.”* And with this admonition, Jesus teaches us to loosen our grip on money and to lean into God and trust that God will love and care for us.

I have not been willing to let go of my stuff, and I think that the reason is that I don’t fully trust that God will provide for me. Let me repeat that, I don’t fully trust that God will provide for me, or at least provide for me in the manner to which I have become accustomed. If I go another layer deeper into the my reasons I may also recognize fear. Fear of losing control. Fear of not being able to freely choose what I want to do. Fear of being seen us unsuccessful, unworthy, or less than. Lack of trust and fear, I

have all of this ego baggage that is getting in the way of letting go of my stuff.

I like my stuff. I like my nest egg. I like my home and cars. I feel that I have earned these things through hard work. But Jesus says, *"Sell your possessions, and give alms."*

Now, society not only teaches us to consume, but it teaches us to work hard, be responsible for our own welfare, and save for retirement. Many of you here today are living on retirement savings and Social Security. If this is the case, then do retirees get an exemption to letting go of money? Do Jesus' teachings about money cease to be true if you have to take care of young children? Again, this stuff about money is not easy.

But, if we trust God, if we let God take care of us, then we will be moving in a direction that minimizes fear and maximizes our experience of God's kingdom.

"Jesus said to his disciples, "Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give alms."

In my own lived life, I have stepped out in trust a few times. God provided for me to get through seminary. And, when I took a sixty percent pay cut to become a full-time parish priest, my spending adjusted accordingly, and I felt like I had more money than ever. Some of you already know the deep satisfaction of giving generously of your treasure. And, some of you still have this to look forward to.

When we finally let God be in control then we can let go of money. Or, maybe it's the reverse. When you let go of money's grip then you can let God take care. It has been said that seventy percent of the worries of Americans are about money. Imagine what America would be like if more of us let go of our money worries. Yes, we would better care for the poor, but we would also remove the barriers that money becomes for our spiritual journey. However, you can only reduce your worries about money when you let go of your money and let God be in control.

Now, to help us live into this mantra of letting go, I want to once again turn to Marie Kondo. Marie Kondo is the de-cluttering guru from Japan who wrote the 2011 bestselling book, “The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up.” These days Marie Kondo has a Netflix series streaming in 190 countries. De-cluttering is all the rage.

Marie Kondo suggests a four stage process of letting go which is directly applicable to selling our possessions and even letting go of our money. These four steps are hold, ponder, thank and let go.

First, hold a possession in your hands and look at it. If it is too big to hold, then place your hand on it, but still examine the object.

Second, ponder or think about the object. Remember how it came into your possession. Explore how the possession makes you feel. Do you feel that the money or possession was God’s blessing?

Third, thank the possession, or as goofy as it sounds, thank the money. Thank God for the gift that the money has been to you. Have gratitude for the possession in your heart.

And finally, loosen your grip and let it go. Sell it. Donate it. And, give away the money or alms. Practice these steps to hold, ponder, thank and then let go of your possessions, and let God put you into God’s care.

There is joy in following the teachings of Jesus about money. There is delight in letting go of stuff and letting go of money’s grip. Don’t you want the joy of letting go of money and letting God be in control?