

We see the connection between the first reading and the Gospel passage today is whether we should be acquiring more and more material things. We know the answer to that but the first reading and Gospel passage have different reasons for why we are not to just seek to acquire more and more material things.

The reason the first reading gives is that it will just be left to another person. The people at the time of the first reading did not yet know about heaven. They just believed everyone went to a place of shadows underground when they died. They did not know about any reward in heaven. We know that the reason our Lord teaches not to acquire those material things is so that we will receive that reward of heaven. We notice too that our Lord starts off this teaching not by saying avoid material things but avoid greed. And so we can conclude from that that a lot of material things are not bad, but rather if we have the attitude to greed with regard to them, that is bad.

St. Basil who was a bishop in what is now Turkey and who died in the year 379 in commenting on this Gospel passage points out that the person was misusing what God had given him because he did not share what he had with others who were in need. We share some of what we have with those in need so we are not like the person in today's Gospel who did not share anything as St. Basil points out, but can we say we really share enough with those in need or do we rather act in a way that is closer to the man in today's Gospel than to someone who is very generous?

St. Athanasius comments on this Gospel passage by not so much referring to the material things but rather by saying it is an example of someone who thinks his or her day of judgment is a long way in the future and so feels that it is nothing to be concerned about at this time. We see that applies not only to our attitude about material things but our attitude about all of our responsibilities and so we need to keep this teaching by St. Athanasius in mind in all of our decisions.

We see that the first reading's attitude toward work is different than the teaching of our Church about work today in that we don't see anything in the first reading about work contributing to bringing about God's Kingdom whereas today we understand that is to be our understanding about the purpose of our work. Since the festival is going on this week we think especially of how the work done for the festival and all work done for the parish is bringing about God's Kingdom. We see then as well that the person in the Gospel was not bringing about God's Kingdom the way he was working and acquiring things. We notice then that it is not so much the fact of acquiring material things that is bad but what we do with them determines whether it is good or bad. Do we use these material goods to do God's work as last week we mentioned St. Bernard says that is what we should do with material goods, or do we use them for selfish purposes? So although our Lord is not saying having material things is bad, the person in the Gospel shows us that we can easily make up poor excuses for why we need so many material things. We might think not acquiring material things will take away our happiness, but we know all of our Lord's teaching us for our happiness.

In our second reading today St. Paul says that we are to put to death the parts of us that are earthly: impurity, passion and evil desire. St. Bernard of Clairvaux says of chastity: What is more beautiful than chastity? He says chastity changes an enemy of God into a friend of God and transforms that person into an angel. St. Bernard says that chastity is the most heavenly endowment that earth can boast. One of the ways impurity occurs is

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the unmarried person watching something impure on television with the purpose of having his or her sexual passions stirred to lust. That is a serious sin and if that program is watched just out of curiosity and not for lust, it is a venial sin because it could lead to having the sexual passions stirred. The only time it is proper for the sexual passion to be stirred is within marriage. A person is helped to avoid sins of impurity by the sacrament of Reconciliation, prayer and the reception of Holy Communion.

So as we continue this celebration of the Eucharist we remember it is not an excuse to say that there are too many temptations to impurity because with prayer, Holy Communion and the Sacrament of Reconciliation a person is able to live that chastity which St. Bernard says transforms the person into angel.