



# Breaking Open the Word of Faith

Good News Reflections for the Sundays of August, 2016

by Terry A . Modica



## 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

August 7, 2016

Read:

Wisdom 18:6-9

Ps 33:1, 12, 18-22

Hebrews 11:1-2, 8-19

Luke 12:32-48



### Reflect:

We're told in this Sunday's Gospel reading that God is "pleased" to give us his kingdom, which includes eternal life in heaven as well as all the benefits of his love and goodness here on earth.

God does not withhold anything good from us. But do we avail ourselves of all he offers?

Jesus explains: If you value earthly treasures more than you treasure opportunities to share God's love and blessings with others, your hands are full of nothing that will last. If your "money bags" are filled with worldly goals that push God out, or selfish plans that push others out, or ungodly relationships that push holiness out from your life, there isn't much room for the wondrous and eternal gifts of God. "For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be."

Anything not of God is detrimental to us and, in the end, pointless, because it does not unite us to God and we cannot take it to heaven. We need to trade it in for the inexhaustible treasures that come from God.

Jesus isn't saying that we have to literally sell all of our worldly possessions in order to make room for divine treasures. What matters is our motive for having these things. Are they used for serving the kingdom of God or are they serving only earthly, temporary, selfish purposes?

Whatever enhances our union with God -- and only this -- is a treasure that we'll enjoy for all of eternity.

Jesus warns us not to waste time being lazy about purging our lives of earthly treasures. We don't know when the Master will come to take us away to the

heavenly banquet of eternal union with God. Will we be ready? Not if we're more interested in feeding our worldly desires.

This is why God, in his great mercy, provides Purgatory. Separation from earthly treasures (the purging) is painful when we prefer them over heavenly goods; Jesus describes this as the "beatings" that the Master's servants get.

Why wait for that? Now is the time to prefer only the kingdom of God and build up our cache of gifts that no thief can reach nor moth destroy.

### Questions for Personal Reflection:

† If you knew you were going to die tomorrow, what would you do today to prepare?

† What attitudes, what goals, and what plans do you have that don't assist the kingdom of God? What habits or addictions? Unloving behaviors? Unforgiveness and unresolved conflicts?

### Questions for Faith Sharing:

† Describe an earthly attachment you used to have and explain how God helped you let go of it. What divine treasure did you gain?

### Comments/Prayer Requests:

## 20<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

August 14, 2016

Read:

Jeremiah 38:4-6, 8-10  
Ps 40:2-4, 18 (with 14b)  
Hebrews 12:1-4  
Luke 12:49-53



### Reflect:

In this Sunday's Gospel reading, Jesus says that he did not come to bring peace to earth. He came to light a fire. The fire that he longed for with great anguish was the presence of the Holy Spirit alive and active within each of his followers. This is what changes the world. This is what brings lasting peace, first within us and then flowing out from us.

The Holy Spirit is a fire that purifies us from impurities -- the unloving behaviors and attitudes -- that cause disharmony, disunity, conflicts and war. This purification makes us capable of feeling peaceful even in the midst of trials and attacks from others. This is what makes us channels of God's peace in a world that desperately needs it. If you do not yet feel the fire of the Holy Spirit impassioning you to spread the peace of Christ, Jesus is in anguish over you.

Think of the evil around you that you've been wishing would stop. What does Jesus want you to do about it? What impurities in your own spirit needs to be burn off by the fire of the Holy Spirit so you can overshadow the evil with divine goodness? Look at what Jesus had to do. What baptism was he talking about? Not the water baptism he'd already received. It was the baptism of painful self-sacrifice, which he willingly accepted in order to rescue us from evil.

To stop evil, we have to become like Jesus. Our willingness to make sacrifices for others is a sign of Christian maturity. We should be burning with so much love that we are not happy unless we're pouring our hearts and souls into works and prayers that to make a difference in someone else's ability to receive eternal peace.

Jesus noted that this fire divides households. It divides us from anyone who remains self-centered and

unwilling to make sacrifices that will lead to peace. Nevertheless, we must continue to give them love. This heats up the fire within us, which purifies us further. And gradually, the world changes.

### Questions for Personal Reflection:

† Who has "burnt" you? What pain has been inflicted on you by others? See this as happening to Jesus, too. Instead of retaliating to try to stop the pain, choose a sacrifice that you're willing to make for them.

† Jesus appreciates the sacrifices you make for others. How does his appreciation make you feel?

### Questions for Faith Sharing:

† How is it possible to experience peace after making a sacrifice for someone who is unloving toward you?

† Give an example of an everyday sacrifice you've made. How does the Holy Spirit bring God's kingdom to earth through this?

### Comments/Prayer Requests: