

First Sunday of Advent – Haves and Have Nots

*Delivered by Rev. Fr. Ghevond Ajamian
St. Sarkis Armenian Church. Carrollton, TX
November 27, 2016
Gospel Reading: Luke 12:13-31*

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

This past Thursday we celebrated Thanksgiving, a time when we remember and count our blessings; our home, cars, clothing, food, money, health, friends and family. Beginning with Thanksgiving and continuing until Christmas, this season is a time when we remember those who do not have the blessings that God has given us. Ultimately, everyone can be divided into two groups: the haves and the have nots. This is not a new concept, but has existed for millennia, even from the times of Christ. These two groups are whom Christ addresses in today's Gospel reading.

Today, Christ speaks of a rich man who has a great harvest and decides to store it in his barn, but there is not enough room. So he decides he will tear down the walls, make it larger and store all the extra crops. When he has done this, he is convinced that he can now relax, eat, drink and be merry for many years. But that very night God takes his soul away and chastises him for doing everything in vain.

From this parable we learn two things about this rich man. First, he never saw beyond himself. Everything was about him and his survival. This parable is the most egocentric parable in all the Gospels because it is full of the words: I, me, my and mine. His only thought was about keeping and storing and not giving, constantly craving more and more. Like the Roman proverb says, money is like sea water, the more a man drinks, the thirstier he becomes.

Second, he never saw beyond this life. All of his plans were based on this life and world, never thinking about the next life. There is a story of a conversation between a young and ambitious lad and an older man who knew life. Said the young man, "I will learn my trade." "And then?" said the older man. "I will set up in business." "And then?" "I will make my fortune." "And then?" "I suppose that I shall grow old and retire and live on my money." "And then?" "Well, I suppose that someday I will die." "And then?" came the last stabbing question. Those that have must remember that there is a life to come and we must prepare for that life.

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And then Jesus addresses the have nots. His main encouragement is not to worry. We all worry about a laundry list of things, but we are told it is useless. Worrying does nothing but remove and distract us from the truth of Christ. Yet it does something even more damaging. Worrying strangles our faith in, our love for and our relationship with God.

The very word, *worry* originally came from the Old English word, *wyrgan* which means “to strangle”. The word *worry* is also related to the words *wring*, *writhe*, *wrestle* and *wreath*, because they all come from the Proto Indo-European word for “to turn/twist”. But when we become over anxious and worried about something, we usually have a panic attack. During a panic attack, there is a shortness of breath and we feel like we are being strangled.

When Christ says not to worry, he is actually saying that we must not be strangled by the cares, fears and problems of this world, but rather we must do our best with what we have and give the rest to God. We must follow His will and when we do that and then we will find the Kingdom of God. This is the first thing we must do, but we do that second or third. We focus on taking care of our bodies and selves first and then seeking the Kingdom of God.

In reality, we all fall into these two categories: the haves and the have nots. As Christians who have, we must give from our surplus of blessings to others. We must use what we need and give freely to others, remembering them and also the life that awaits us when we die. But as Christians who have not, we must do all that we can with what we have and be ready and willing to give the rest to God, so He can free us from the strangling chokehold this world and society has around our necks.

Amen.