



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ

Treasure hunt

Friday, 20 June 2014

(by *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly ed. in English, n. 26, 27 June 2014)

“Money, vanity and power” won’t make us happy. The real treasures, the riches that matter, are “love, patience, service to others and worshipping God”. This was Pope Francis’ message at Mass, in which he reflected on the day’s readings from the Gospel of Matthew (6:19-23) and the Second Book of Kings (11:1-4, 9-18, 20).

The Holy Father’s homily focused on the Gospel passage: “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also”. In other words, the Pope paraphrased, “Jesus’ advice is simple: don’t accumulate treasures for yourself on earth! This is advice to be prudent”. Jesus was basically saying, “Look, they don’t serve any purpose, don’t waste your time!”.

There are three treasures in particular that Jesus warned about on various occasions. “The first treasure is gold, money, wealth”, the Bishop of Rome explained. And in fact, you aren’t safe with this type of treasure, because it can be stolen. Investments aren’t secure because “the stock market can crash and you’re left with nothing!”. And “tell me, does one extra Euro make you happier or not?” Thus, the Pope continued, “wealth is a dangerous treasure”. Of course, it can be useful “for doing many good things”, for example, “for raising the family”. However, he cautioned,

“if you accumulate it as a treasure, it steals your soul”. This is why “Jesus, in the Gospel, addresses this topic: wealth, putting your hopes in wealth”. And he says to be careful because it’s a treasure “that isn’t useful”.

The second treasure the Lord talks about is “vanity”, that is, seeking “prestige, showing off”. Jesus always condemned this behaviour. “Let’s think about what he says to the legal experts when they fast, when they give hand-outs, when they pray” so as “to be seen”. Vanity, too, “isn’t useful, it ends. Beauty ends”. The Pontiff cited a “rather strong” expression from St Bernard, who said that “beauty is destined to be food for worms”.

Pride, power, “is the third treasure” that Jesus specified as useless and dangerous. This reality is highlighted in the first reading from the Second Book of Kings, which tells the story of the “cruel Queen Athalia: her great power lasted seven years, and then she was killed”. In other words, here today and gone tomorrow, because “power ends: so many great, proud, powerful men and women died in obscurity, in poverty or in prison...”. This then, is the essence of Jesus’ teaching: “Don’t accumulate! Don’t accumulate money, don’t accumulate vanity, don’t accumulate pride, power! These treasures serve no purpose!”. There are instead other treasures to accumulate, the Pontiff asserted. In fact it can be good to accumulate treasure, which Jesus says in the same Gospel passage: “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also”. This is really “Jesus’ message: have a free heart”. Otherwise, “if your treasure is in wealth, in vanity, in power or in pride, your heart will be chained there, your heart will be a slave to wealth, to vanity, to pride”.

On this line of reasoning, Pope Francis recommended having “a free heart”, precisely because “Jesus speaks to us about freedom of the heart”. And “one can only have a free heart with the treasures of heaven: love, patience, service to others, worshipping God”. These “are the true riches that cannot be stolen”. The other types of treasures — money, vanity, power — weigh down the heart, chain it, don’t allow it freedom”.

Therefore, it’s important to concentrate on accumulating the true treasures, those that “free the heart”, that make us men and women with “that freedom of God’s children”. The Gospel says that “if your heart is enslaved, your eyes, your heart will not be luminous”. In fact, Pope Francis emphasized, “an enslaved heart is not a luminous heart: it will be filled with darkness!”. This is why “if we accumulate earthly treasures, we accumulate darkness that has no purpose, which doesn’t give us joy. But above all, it doesn’t give us freedom”.

Instead, the Pope explained, “a free heart is a luminous heart, which lights up others, which shows the way to God’s door”. It is “a luminous heart, which isn’t in chains, which is a heart that goes forth and even ages well, because it ages like fine wine: fine wine gets better with age! Vice versa, he added, “a heart that isn’t luminous is like bad wine: with time it spoils and becomes vinegar”.

In concluding the Pontiff prayed that the Lord “give us this spiritual prudence to understand where

my heart is, to which treasure my heart is attached". And that "he also give us the strength to 'release it', if it's chained, so that it may become free, become luminous and give us this beautiful happiness of God's children, the true freedom".