

A reading from the book of Ecclesiastes.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

Vanity of vanities, says the Teacher,  
vanity of vanities! All is vanity.  
Sometimes one who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill  
must leave all to be enjoyed by another  
who did not toil for it.  
This also is vanity and a great evil.  
What does a person get from all their toil and strain ,  
their toil under the sun?  
For their days are full of pain,  
and their work is a vexation;  
even at night their minds do not rest.  
This also is vanity.



Pause for **THREE** seconds  
then look up at the people  
and say SLOWLY:

The WORD of the LORD.

*Thanks be to God.*

A reading from the letter of Saint Paul to the Colossians.

Pause - and look up at the assembly

Brothers and sisters:

If you have been raised with Christ,  
seek the things that are above,  
where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.  
Set your minds on things that are above,  
not on things that are on earth,  
for you have died,  
and your life is hidden with Christ in God.  
When Christ who is your life is revealed,  
then you also will be revealed with him in glory.  
Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly:  
fornication, impurity, passion,  
evil desire, and greed, which is idolatry.  
Do not lie to one another,  
seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices  
and have clothed yourselves with the new self,  
which is being renewed in knowledge  
according to the image of its creator.  
In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew,  
circumcised and uncircumcised,  
barbarian, Scythian,  
slave and free;  
but Christ is all and in all!

Scythian = **SITH**-ee-hun

Pause for **THREE** seconds  
then look up at the people  
and say SLOWLY:



The WORD of the LORD.

*Thanks be to God.*

## GOSPEL READING – C 18

The Lord be with you.

*And with your spirit.*

A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke.

*Glory to you, O Lord.*

Someone in the crowd said to Jesus,  
“Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.”  
But he said to him,  
“Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?”  
And Jesus said to the crowd,  
“Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed;  
for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.”  
Then Jesus told them a parable:  
“The land of a rich man produced abundantly.  
And he thought to himself,  
‘What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?’  
Then he said, ‘I will do this:  
I will pull down my barns and build larger ones,  
and there I will store all my grain and my goods.  
And I will say to my soul,  
“Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years;  
relax, eat, drink, be merry.”’  
But God said to him,  
‘You fool!  
This very night your life is being demanded of you.  
And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’  
So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves  
but are not rich toward God.”



The GOSPEL of the LORD.

*Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.*

## SCRIPTURES IN DEPTH

Reading I: Ecclesiastes 1:2; 2:21-23

Ecclesiastes is not one of the most loved books of the Bible. In fact, we may sometimes wonder why it is in the canon at all. But with that taste for shocking paradox that was characteristic of him, Sir Edwyn Hoskyns used to say that Ecclesiastes is the most Christian book in the Old Testament!

What he meant was that Ecclesiastes is a ruthless exposure of what human life is apart from God and, if taken really seriously, prepares the way for a hearing of the gospel of Christ.

Ecclesiastes is not so much good news as it is the bad news that has to be heard before the good news becomes audible. “Vanity of vanities”—all of human life is ultimately futile and meaningless if viewed in itself, apart from God.

Responsorial Psalm: 90:3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 14, 17

Verses 3-6 from the first part of the psalm, point up the contrast between God’s eternity and human mortality. Verses 12-14, 17 come from the second half of the psalm which a prayer for God’s favor as a compensation for human beings’ fleeting life, so that despite their transitoriness their work may prosper.

Little is known about the origin of this psalm. As the (third) stanza shows, it is influenced by wisdom theology (“that we may [gain] a heart of wisdom”).

Reading II: Colossians 3:1-5, 9-11

As we have seen earlier, Colossians goes further than Romans in recognizing the risen life as already a present reality in which the baptized share.

But Colossians does not overlook the need for continual reiteration of the imperative (“seek the things. . . ; put to death. . . ; do not lie. . .”).

Maintenance of the baptismal state of being raised with Christ depends upon constantly and actively seeking to live out the risen life.

Seek the things that are above,” that is, a “transcendent quality of living. This transcendence is not to be understood spatially, as it were, suggesting a neo-Platonic escape from this present world, but a qualitatively transcendent existence within the world.

Our relation to God is not a ‘religious’ relationship to the highest, most beautiful, powerful and best Being imaginable—but our relation to God is a new life in ‘existence for others,’ through participation in the being of Jesus . . . the ‘man for others,’ and therefore the crucified, the man who lives out of the transcendent” (D. Bonhoeffer).

Hence the apostolic writer concludes, not with the individualistic ascetic that we might have expected from his initial prohibitions of immorality, etc., but with an affirmation about the Christian community as a community in which there is not “Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man.”

Such distinctions belong to the penultimate, not to the ultimate. It is easy to translate these human divisions into contemporary terms.

Gospel: Luke 12:13-21

The Gospel of this day draws together the thoughts of the first two readings and gives them precision.

The rich fool is a man who lived his life without reference to God and was caught in the toils of futility and meaninglessness (“vanity of vanities!”). He organized his life without reference to the transcendent; he did not “seek the things that are above.”

So comes the crashing judgment: “This night your soul [that is, your life] is required of you.”

Because he viewed this present existence as autonomous, without any reference to God, because he organized it without reference to the transcendent upon which it depends (note how he thought his own existence was under his own control), it came as a shock to learn that it was God’s to give and God’s to take away again.

The rich fool condemns himself to an existence that is, qualitatively speaking, a life in death.

Reginald H. Fuller