

***Eighteenth Sunday C 2013***  
***Father Frank Matera***  
***What Would You Do?***

Imagine that you have just received a major promotion in your firm that brings with it a substantial increase of salary. What will you do with the extra money? Your business suddenly takes off, and you can now establish franchises throughout the country? What will you do with the extra money? That stock in which you were heavily invested has tripled in value? What will you do with the extra money?

What would you have done if you were the rich man of today's Gospel?

When we hear this parable, it is easy to agree with its final conclusion. It is easy to say what the rich man should have done. Instead of building larger barns, he should have given his surplus—or at least a portion of it—to those in need. Instead of thinking only of himself, he should have considered the needs of others. Instead of storing up treasure for himself, he should have become rich in God's sight by giving to those in need.

Looking back, after the fact, it is easy to see the vanity and foolishness of this man's life. All of his hard-earned wealth will now go to those who did not labor for it. The harvest he thought would sustain him will rot and decay in the magnificent barns he has built. Yes, looking back, it is easy to see the vanity and foolishness of this man's life.

It is more difficult to see the vanity and foolishness of our own life since we are in the midst of our life. It is more difficult to recognize the foolishness of our own behavior. It is always easier to find new reasons, convincing reasons, powerful reasons, why our situation is different, why this parable does not apply to us.

But perhaps we can gain some wisdom from the tragic life of this man—a man who had the opportunity to help others but did not take advantage of it, a man who could have done great things but did not. Perhaps we can gain some wisdom from the tragic life of this man who could have piled up wealth for himself in God's sight by assisting those in need. Perhaps we can gain some wisdom from this man who could have done so much good but was fearful that he might not have enough for himself.

Here is a man who was afraid he would not have enough for himself. Here is a man who thought he needed more than he had. Here is a man who was not satisfied with what he had. Here is a man who failed to understand this rule: *if we cannot share the little we have with others, there will never be enough for us no matter how much we have*. Here is a man who failed to understand this principle: *there is never too little to share with others*. Here is a man who failed to understand what he should do with what he had.

If the man of today's gospel had a second chance, I suspect he would have changed his behavior. If he had a second chance, I suspect he would have distributed his surplus wealth to the poor. If he had a second chance, he would have lived more generously; he would have lived more kindly; he would have lived more wisely. But he had no second chance.

How fortunate we are because we have a second chance. How fortunate we are because it is not too late us. How fortunate we are because we have been raised to new life with Christ—a life of grace that empowers us to live in an extraordinarily generous way. How fortunate we are because we know what that man did not know.