

A Fool And His Money Are Soon Parted

In Luke, Chapter 12, Verses 16-21, Jesus tells the parable about the rich fool who produced an overly abundant harvest. His barns were not big enough to store all that he reaped. So, he decided to tear down his existing barns and replace them with larger ones. He was pleased with his decision and had accumulated enough that he could sit back and enjoy his excess for many years to come. God, however, did not look upon his choices with favor for He believed the rich man to be very foolish since that very night he would die. Then who would acquire his wealth? God certainly was not impressed with the treasure the man had stored up for he was not rich at all in the things that mattered to God.

This parable poses an interesting dilemma for us and our goal to accumulate wealth. For we are told that all we have is a gift from God. So why would He give us riches if He did not approve? Being good stewards of God's gifts means that we share our time, talent and treasure. Perhaps the most difficult gift to share is our time. The parents who sacrifice careers to spend time with their children—teaching, playing, cherishing—have chosen to be with them more than being with their boss. Those who live the religious life sacrifice companionship to help others grow closer to God. And those who choose the single life often put their time to work for the betterment of society and its institutions that support our way of life.

I grew up in a small farming community in Kansas. No one was

rich. I think the wealthiest family drove a Buick. But one individual stood out: Crazy Oscar. Oscar worked in a machine shop when he was young. He was frugal—probably never spent more than 10% of his income. He lived with his sister who provided most of their food from her huge garden. Oscar's only car that he ever owned was a 1930 Model A Ford. He was engaged to the girl next door for 25 years until she gave up on him. When Oscar was in his mid-forties, he took up farming, buying up tracts of land as older farmers died off. He was shrewd. While he bought a modest tractor and a few simple implements, he did not invest in big trucks, large combines with massive grain and corn heads, or even simple corrugated storage bins. He found it was more profitable to hire the harvesting done by the neighboring farmers who were shelling out big payments to the bank for their equipment.

Oscar's sister died before she was sixty-five and Oscar made it to seventy before he keeled over with a heart attack. Rumors were that his sizable fortune went to some distant cousins out in western Kansas. His farmland was auctioned off (below market value) and the land where his homestead stood is now part of a corn field. While Oscar didn't live the life of luxury, he was, no doubt, as foolish as the rich man in the parable. He died alone, without love, without compassion, without redemption. He was possessed by greed and there never was enough money to satisfy it.

Written by Ray Huss, member of our Stewardship Committee

Following Jesus

We follow all sorts of people and organizations on social media. Friends. Celebrities. A favorite author, athlete, charity, or business. At times, we may think before following: do we want the additional postings or emails? Typically, following a business or celebrity does not require much of a commitment. We may or may not read every post that comes through on our feed. We might respond, or we may not. Even when we do, our response is often as simple as hitting the "like" button. Following Jesus is a very different sort of thing. To follow Jesus means to enter into a relationship with him and to exercise good stewardship over that relationship. When Jesus asks us to follow him, we know that doing so is to have an impact in our lives. As with any friendship, if our relationship with Jesus is to grow, we will have to spend time with and pay attention to him. At first, this might mean taking a few moments at the beginning or end of each day for prayer. We may be more attentive during Mass; we may pause in the midst of

our day's activities to notice the beauty of creation, the blessing of family and friends, the gift of kindness and patience shared among co-workers. The best of friends also influence each other, for the



better. Growing in relationship with Jesus will change us, leading us to think of others as well as ourselves, often putting the needs of others first. We learn to be mindful of those who need to know God's love through our actions, serving them, sharing forgiveness, mercy, compassion, and faith. Following Jesus is the work of a lifetime. At every step forward, one is challenged to go further in accepting and loving God's will. Being a disciple is not just something else to do, alongside many other things suitable for Christians; it is a total way of life and requires continuing conversion (Stewardship: A Disciple's Response, p. 15). How will you follow Jesus now and

into the future? How will you learn from and invite him to have an impact in your life? How will your stewardship of this relationship impact the way you live?

by Leisa Anslinger, author and cofounder of Catholic Strengths and Engagement Community (CSEC)