



a Kendall Hunt Company

## **Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C, catechist - RCLB Lectionary**



### **Catechist Background and Preparation**

To prepare for the session read all the readings.

Ecclesiastes 1:2; 2:21-23

Psalm 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9

Colossians 3:1-5, 9-11

Luke 12:13-21

Spend a few minutes reflecting on what these readings mean for you today. Was there a particular reading which appealed to you? Was there a word or image that engaged you?

Read the Word in Liturgy and Catholic Doctrine sections. These give you background on what you will be doing this session. Read over the session outline and make it your own. Check to see what materials you will need for the session.

## **The Word in Liturgy**

The Book of Ecclesiastes is part of the Wisdom literature of the Bible. Little is known of its origins or authorship, although the text is piously attributed to Solomon, presumably because of his reputation as Israel's greatest sage. Most probably, the book dates to a late stage of the Jewish biblical tradition. The author's thesis ("All things are vanity") runs contrary to other sections of the Jewish scriptures that had discerned a divine justice at work in the world.

Rather than assert that good is always rewarded and evil punished, the author of Ecclesiastes is convinced of the ultimate futility of human life and effort. Despite the author's pessimism, the book does contain a strong faith in the Lord and advises the reader to trust in God alone for security. The section we read today is cast in the first person as a form of royal testament, spoken in the voice of Solomon. The king looks back on his life at its end and sees that much of what he accomplished will pass to another and can easily be undone. When read in connection with today's Gospel, this text underlines the transitory nature of human wealth and accomplishment. The text fairly cries out to be completed with the words of the Gospel that advise "growing rich in the sight of God" rather than for oneself.

This week and next the Lectionary provides us with an extensive section from Luke's Gospel in which he deals with the issue of material possessions. The larger context of this discourse is Jesus' journey to Jerusalem, during which he instructs his followers on the requirements of

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discipleship. Luke first offers the core of Jesus' teaching about avoiding greed (vv. 13-15), followed by an illustrative parable (more accurately, an example story) in which he drives home the point that greed only blocks one from acquiring what is really important, i.e., a deeper relationship with God ("rich in the sight of God").

# **Catholic Doctrine**

## **The Tenth Commandment**

The traditional catechetical formulation of the tenth commandment ("you shall not covet your neighbor's goods") concerns the unjust desiring of another's property. Moral handbooks of the past century tended to treat the subject of property in an isolated fashion instead of placing the issue in the larger scope of God's plan of creation and salvation. Thus, in the past, property was seen as an unconditional right, as if it were a value in and of itself. But the earlier viewpoint of the Fathers of the Church saw property more in the context of stewardship in service of God and Christian love.

The tenth commandment forbids greed and all of the violence, disorder and injustice arising from this desire to amass property beyond what one truly needs or deserves. Greed also goes by the name of avarice, which is the passion for wealth, riches and power. The tenth commandment also forbids against envy. Envy, the feeling of resentment over another's goods, can lead to the worst crimes. Indeed, the Book of Wisdom speaks of the devil's envy as the way in which death entered the world.

Both avarice and envy are considered "deadly" or capital sins because they, in turn, lead to other sins and vices. There are seven deadly sins: pride, avarice, envy, wrath, lust, gluttony and sloth. Sinning creates a proclivity to sin by the very repetition of action—in other words sin can become habitual, trapping one into a pattern of behavior. These seven deadly sins can thus spawn a host of other sins.

Jesus preaches a poverty of the heart and sets an example for his disciples to renounce property and goods for the sake of the kingdom. Our Catholic tradition calls this "detachment." True happiness will be found and fulfilled in the vision and beatitude of God. Believers own property in this world and amass a reasonable amount of wealth in order to insure for the future. At the same time, Catholics strive to mortify their cravings and, cooperating with divine grace, prevail over the seductions of pleasure and power.