

Homily

18th Sunday in OT

August 4, 2019

Who remembers watching Bugs Bunny cartoons when you were little? And who remembers Yosemite Sam? For those of us who do, remember that it makes us young at heart. And for those who don't, this will be a real test of my story-telling ability.

One of those stories is about Yosemite Sam as a spoiled rich man living in Bedlam Manor with the title: Sam, Duke of Yosemite.

The story begins with the spoiled Duke yelling at his servant because they are out of money. Bugs Bunny shows up at the door telling Sam that Bugs is the executor of an inheritance which Sam will receive IF Sam can remain mild mannered. Of course, Sam accepts the challenge.

Then Bugs proceeds to find ways to irritate Sam, who responds in every way but mild mannered; Bugs asks for Sam to pass the salt across the lengthy dinner table, then just as Sam gets back to his seat, the pepper, then the olives. At this point, Sam loses his cool and begins to rant and rave. Bugs then informs Sam that his outburst will cost him \$300.

Then Bugs wakes up Sam in the middle of the night to his playing the piano and singing. Then Bugs wakes Sam up in the morning to the loud clanging of a one-man-band. Each time, Sam struggles to keep his cool, failing miserably. This time, Bugs charges Sam \$400.

Finally, Sam decides to take matters in his own hands and tries to get rid of Bugs, first by cutting a hole in the floor to trap Bugs, which Sam falls into himself, twice. Then Sam attempts to squash Bugs with the shining armor battle ax, falling down the long flight of steps instead, with Bugs taking notes for every expletive Sam utters all the way down.

In the end, Sam has conquered his rage and demonstrates this to Bugs by having his servants repeated throw a pie in his face, kick him on the backside and hit him over the head with a rolling pin. Sam says to Bugs, "See, I can take it."

Bugs looks at us and says, "I haven't got the heart to tell him he's used up all the money."

Yosemite Sam was only interested in his money for the sake of having money and what money could do for him. Vanity of vanities. We heard in our first reading about how it is futile to struggle to gather things such as wealth and even wisdom and that rather that we accept the good things God chooses to provide.

Paul urges us to “seek what is above” and to embrace the new self we have in Christ, not the old things of the earth, specifically “immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and the greed that is idolatry.”

Christ Himself tells the crowd, “Take care to guard against all greed,” and “...one’s life does not consist of possessions.”

Here is the key point we can take from all this; the things we have in this life, although not good or evil in themselves, do not lead us to the life God has in store for us. Jesus tells us to be careful to focus not on the treasures we store for ourselves, but to focus on what matters to God, to become rich in God.

What does that mean? What matters to God?

Jesus gives us many examples of what God expects from us, what matters to God; He created us so He could love us and wants us to love Him and our neighbor as ourselves. Everything else points to that. So in everything we do, we do for our love for God and our love for each other.

When we go to confession, we pray an Act of Contrition, which says, basically, I’m sorry and I’ll try to do better. It includes, “I’m sorry because I fear the loss of heaven and the pains of Hell,” which is called imperfect contrition. It continues, “but mostly because my sins offend you, you who are all good and deserving of all my love.” That’s perfect contrition.

When we are sorry and we apologize to someone, do we do it because we have to, like when are parents take us the store where we stole a piece of candy, or do we apologize because we are afraid of the consequences, such as when we ate Dad’s last donut and he will not be happy, or do we do it because we are truly sorry and want the best for the other person and we want to repair the relationship we damaged with our selfishness?

Why do we do what we do? What is our intent?

It’s not so much what we do, but why we do it. It’s the ‘why’ that matters to God. He cares about our intentions; He wants us to love Him with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength. Everything that we are, He wants us to give Him. And He in return will give us more than we can imagine.

We cannot begin to imagine what heaven will be like. Our eyes can’t see heaven, our hands can’t touch heaven, our ears can’t hear heaven, and as scary as the unknown is, we can get a small glimpse of what heaven is like by being Christ for one another, by loving God completely, by living with intent, the intent to love perfectly, even though we will fall short.

The Bible tells us: “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.” Jesus said, “No one can serve two masters. You cannot serve both God and money.” So, is it possible to be a good person and be rich?

Our Catholic Catechism teaches that holiness comes from poverty of the heart. "Jesus enjoins his disciples to prefer him to everything and everyone, and bids them "renounce all that [they have]" for his sake and that of the Gospel. Shortly before his passion, he gave them the example of the poor widow of Jerusalem who, out of her poverty, gave all that she had to live on. The precept of detachment from riches is necessary for entrance into the Kingdom of heaven.

Poverty of Heart. Accumulation of wealth is not itself a sin. If God gave you the gift of money management, then manage a lot of money. And use it for the glory of God. The goal is not destitution, but the love of frugality and loving our neighbors as ourselves so as not to turn away from their poverty. This means sharing what we have as John the Baptist told people, "If anyone has two tunics, he must share with the man who has none.."

Why do we do what we do? What is our intent?

Will we be rich in what matters to God?