

PENTECOST: SHARING NEW LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

The Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost
September 19, 2010

Amos 8:4-7

Psalm 113

1 Timothy 2:1-7

Luke 16:1-13

Godly Gain

There is something about money that is almost addictive. No matter how much people earn, most will seize an opportunity to earn more. Maybe this is due to the sense of power that accompanies wealth. Perhaps it is the measure of security that comes with being rich that makes wealth so desirable. It certainly seems that the rich in our society seem to flourish, some more than ever before, even in these times of economic downturn.

There is nothing inherently wrong with desiring money. In fact, it is quite appropriate to do so. Money is a needed and useful commodity. It is not money, but rather the *love* of money that is the root of all evils. If we are not careful, it is the love of money that can drive us to ungodly actions. There are several reasons that Jesus said, "It is much harder for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle," (Matthew 19:23, *GNT*) and today's readings point to a few.

The prophet Amos speaks of the greedy that get their wealth by taking advantage of the poor. They will certainly not escape the judgment of God. Only the excessive love of money can explain their motivation to sell "worthless wheat at a high price" and their selfish need to "find someone poor who can't pay his debts, not even the price of a pair of sandals, and ... buy him as a slave" (Amos 8:6, *GNT*). Amos also speaks of greedy Israelites who wanted the observance of the Sabbath and New Moon to end so that they could get about the business of selling their crops. During these holy days it was the law to cease all buying and selling and offer burnt offerings and sacrifices. While we may find such behavior shocking, today many people would rather put their time and effort into projects that result in personal gain rather than service to the Lord, service for which there is often little or no monetary compensation.

The Lord's service requires love for God and his people more than love of money. If we are to serve God with a clear conscience, we must assume a posture of humility; we must recognize that even if we are never numbered among the wealthy, our gain in Christ is worth whatever we may deny ourselves. The Psalmist reminds us that God will have mercy on the poor. Undoubtedly, "[God] raises the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from their misery" (Psalm 113:7, *GNT*).

Make no mistake; if we spend most of our time seeking earthly wealth, which is only temporal, we will find that whatever we accumulate will afford little true satisfaction. If we choose to cleave to earthly gain, we lessen our grip on God because "No servant can be the slave of two

masters; such a slave will hate one and love the other or will be loyal to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money” (Luke 16:13, *GNT*). If, however, we spend our precious moments in service to the Lord, our gain will bring true satisfaction both now and in eternity. Be encouraged to give your best service to God, with all assurance that the retirement benefits are out of this world!

This week’s Reflection was prepared by Davina McDonald, Editorial Senior Specialist at the Nida Institute for Biblical Scholarship.

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This week we remember to pray for the work of the Bible Societies in: South Korea – with thanks to God for the successful relocation of their bindery, Bible Korea, to Paju City; and with prayers that its strategic new location will help improve its efficiency and service to the fellowship; and for the success of this year’s UBS World Assembly; **North Korea** – with thanks to God for those who honor and love God; and with prayers that the government will cease neglecting the welfare of its people who are suffering from extreme poverty, famine and illness, and are deprived of religious freedom; and for an open door to spread the Gospel to all who will hear; **Thailand** – with thanks to God for the launch of new Scripture resources and the good progress on the Revised Thai Old Testament; and with prayers for the completion of the Revised Thai Bible for their Sign Language project, which is facing a number of challenges; for more suitable accommodation for the Society, and for God’s blessing on the staff and new board members to be elected this year.

Activity Corner: “Sharing my Gifts and Talents”

Supplies Needed: Bible, white paper, pens/pencils, crayons, markers

Read Luke 16:10-13. Essentially, these verses of Scripture point to the importance of good stewardship. All of us are given great and small gifts and talents and God will hold us accountable as to how we use them. On a sheet of paper have each member of the group write down three of what they consider their own best talents and how these gifts can be used in God’s service. Take turns reading the lists of talents and discuss together the ways in which we can be faithful stewards of these gifts with which God has blessed us. Close by having everyone in the group write out Luke 16:13 and then memorize the verse together.