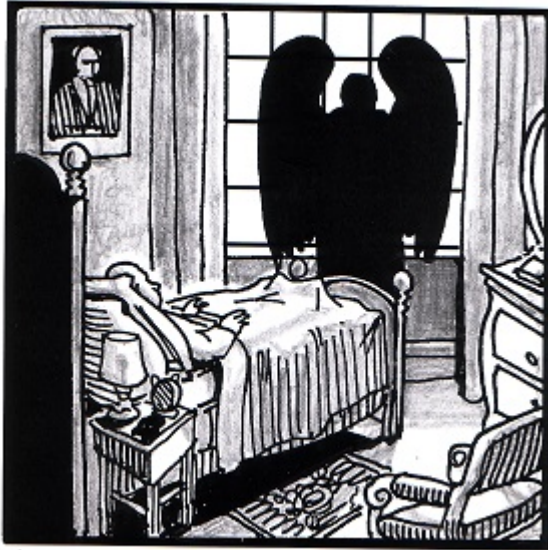


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October 18, 2020

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“One’s life does not consist of possessions” (Luke 12:15).

Eph 2:1-10; Luke 12:13-21

The seven Capital Sins are called deadly because they pervert our capacity to love. Instead of loving persons and building relationships, we love things—possessions, food, sexual pleasure, status, control. This distorts the heart, prevents us from becoming human and eventually leads to the death of the soul. The Letter to Timothy says, “The love of money is the root of all evil,” (1 Tim 6:10). A greedy man becomes a slave to his wealth, tending it, growing it, protecting it, while life passes him by.

Jesus calls the rich farmer in his parable a “fool” for thinking that his possessions guaranteed him security and happiness when that very night he was going to die. Jesus preached that “where your treasure is there will your heart be” (Luke 12:34) and insisted that there were higher treasures than material possessions, which can be lost in an instant. Real treasures, like friendship, virtue, integrity, freedom and love, especially love for God, bring a person into harmony with every aspect of life.

Jesus rejected Satan’s offer in the desert of all the riches of the world. Instead, Jesus carried out his ministry as an itinerant preacher, traveling light, giving himself away to everyone. He brought healing and blessing, wise parables and compassion for those suffering physical and spiritual ills. Where he was welcomed, he gave joy. When resisted, he had prayer to sustain him. When he died, he left only a seamless cloak for the soldiers to gamble on, and even his tomb was borrowed.

Jesus' remarkable freedom must have contrasted with the scribes and Pharisees, so protective of their official status and privilege. Or the wealthy Sadducees he addressed in the parable of Dives and Lazarus. The Kingdom Jesus preached was accessible to the poor. Discipleship was open to anyone willing to let go of the need for certainty, able to travel without sandals, walking stick, coin purse, extra clothing or a reservation up ahead for the night. The rich young man who went away sad could not take that step.

We are all challenged to know what real treasure is and to focus our hearts there. We can take nothing with us except what we give away. It is never too late to prepare for God by making room. Decluttering a basement may be easier than letting go of our pride, the battles we are still waging to justify our decisions, the wounds that keep us from forgiving others who hurt us. The detachment Jesus proposes is the freedom to follow him more closely, forgetting the past and keeping our eyes on the prize, the abundant life he wants for us until the time we surrender our final breath and go to God.

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