

(English translation)

March 1979

## Word of Life

**“Sell your belongings and give alms. Provide money bags for yourselves that do not wear out, an inexhaustible treasure in heaven that no thief can reach nor moth destroy.” (Lk 12:33)**

Are you young, aspiring to a life that has an ideal, that is totally committing and calls for a complete change in you? Then listen to Jesus, because no one else in the world will ask as much of you. You are being given an opportunity to prove your faith, your generosity, and your heroism.

Are you an adult, longing for a sound way of life that is serious and committed and will not disappoint you? Or are you an older person who wants to dedicate the golden years of your life to someone who will not deceive you, to live without worries that exhaust you? These words of Jesus are also for you.

They conclude a series of exhortations in which Jesus asks you not to worry over what you will eat or what you will wear but, rather, to act as the birds of the air that do not sow, and the lilies of the field that do not weave. Banish, therefore, from your heart all anxieties over the things of this earth. The Father, who loves you more than the birds and the flowers, will take care of you himself.

This is why Jesus tells you,

**"Sell your belongings and give alms. Provide money bags for yourselves that do not wear out, an inexhaustible treasure in heaven that no thief can reach nor moth destroy."**

In its entirety, and in every word it contains, the Gospel demands everything from you--everything you are and everything you possess.

Prior to Christ's coming into the world, God had never made such radical demands. In the Old Testament, earthly riches were seen as good, as a blessing from God. Giving alms to the needy was demanded, but as a means to obtain the benevolence of the Almighty.

Later on, the idea of a reward in the next life became more commonly accepted among members of the Jewish faith. A king, who had been reprimanded for having given away his possessions, replied, "My ancestors accumulated treasures for this life, but I have accumulated treasures for the next one." In general, however, Jews did not see any contradiction between accumulating wealth here on earth and preparing a treasure in heaven.

The words of Jesus are original because he demands a total gift. He asks everything from you. He doesn't want you to be overly concerned about the things of this world. He wants you to rely on him alone.

He knows that earthly wealth is a tremendous obstacle for you because it can occupy your heart, whereas he wants to possess your heart for himself.

This is why he urges you:

**"Sell your belongings and give alms. Provide money bags for yourselves that do not wear out, an inexhaustible treasure in heaven that no thief can reach nor moth destroy. "**

If you cannot physically rid yourself of your possessions, because of family ties or other responsibilities, or if your position in life demands that you live in a certain way, still you should detach yourself from them spiritually, being no more than their administrator. In this way, while dealing with wealth you can love others, and by administering it on their behalf, you can accumulate a treasure that moths cannot destroy, nor thieves carry off.

How can you be certain about what you should keep and what you should dispose of? Listen to the voice of God within you; and if you cannot decide on your own, seek someone's advice. Then you

will discover how many superfluous things there are among your possessions. Do not keep them. Give them away. Give to those who have not. Put into practice these words of Jesus, "Sell... and give." If you do this, you will fill up bags that do not wear out.

Since you live in the world, it is only logical that you should be concerned with money and other material things. However, God does not want you to be preoccupied with them. So be concerned with securing only that amount which is indispensable for you to live according to your needs. As for the rest:

**"Sell your belongings and give alms. Provide money bags for yourselves that do not wear out, an inexhaustible treasure in heaven that no thief can reach nor moth destroy."**

Pope Paul VI was truly poor. The way he wanted to be buried ("in a plain coffin in the bare earth") proved this. Shortly before dying he told his brother, "My suitcases for that all-important trip have been ready for some time."

This is what you should do, too: prepare your suitcases.

In the time of Jesus they may have been called "money bags" but the meaning is the same. Prepare them day by day. Fill them with things that might be useful to others. For you truly possess what you give away. Think of how much hunger there is in the world, how much suffering, how many needs.

Put every act of love and every deed done for your neighbor into your suitcase as well.

Do everything for God, telling him in your heart, "This is for You." Perform every action well, perfectly, because it is destined for heaven where it will remain for eternity.

By Chiara Lubich

You can find a complete version of Chiara's commentary in *Words to Live By* (New City Press, 1980)