

We all love money. In spite of what the bible says. And don't we love the wonderful things it can buy.

And it can buy all sorts of things. Lots of material goods and services.

The houses we live in. Or want to live in. The house we want to buy. It can get rid of the mortgage, do up the kitchen, or the bathroom or the whole place. It can pay the rent.

It can give us holidays in luxury hotels, meals in famous restaurants. It can take us to London for breakfast, Paris for lunch and Rome for dinner.

It can supply clothes, shoes, jewellery and shopping. Or perhaps cars, boats, watches and wine. Artworks, computers, stereo's, diving and golf. Money can mean having all sorts of stuff.

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How many of you thought about the \$20 million Lotto the other Saturday night? I have to confess that Janet and I buy the odd Lotto ticket. Odd because we never get one number, let alone 6. But we buy them, and keep buying them, in the hope that our numbers will come up, and that if we win, our lives will be changed. Changed, wonderfully for the better, that we might be transformed into different, new people. People with more choice and more options, wouldn't it be marvellous.

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Funnily enough, this money and Lotto thinking corresponds to our gospel reading for today, because this morning we have a Lotto winner. Someone who has won a big prize.

Peter has thrown his nets over the side and caught so many fish, that he needs two boats to haul them in. There is no doubt this is a financial windfall, the depositing of a large sum into the business account of Peter, Fisherman at Large.

The market for fish is great, supply is low and demand is high. Lots of fish to market equals big profit.

This big profit's come about because of Jesus. He told Peter to chuck his nets in. This is a Jesus gift. It's real money. It's a Lotto prize.

And like the Lotto, it's completely undeserved. An act of grace.

You buy a ticket, you wait, do nothing, check your numbers and you win. Completely undeserved.

You do as Jesus asks you and your nets fill with fish. You win. An act of grace.

Now, this Jesus gift would have changed Peters life. He could have got some goods he wanted. Perhaps some new clothes for his wife and family, a donkey, a field, a house even, a new boat. Peter loved things too.

He had won the Lotto this week, and with Jesus on board who knew what would happen tomorrow, perhaps it would happen again.

But that's not what happened. In fact, Peter walks away, he leaves everything ... and follows Jesus.

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Our story also tells us Peter falls to Jesus knees, begs forgiveness and says that he is an unworthy man.

I think that while this enormous number of fish is coming up out of the water, Peter is thinking. Thinking about the things he'd seen. His mother-in-law healed, the people tuning up to his house by the dozen ... being set free and made whole.

He had seen amazing things done for others, now he was experiencing it himself.

I think Peter saw something other than fish coming up out of the sea, something other than profit. Something other than new nets and boats, new clothes and more stuff.

I think he saw the goodness of God. God, who in this man healed his wife's mum, those people clamouring at his home. God at whose word the lotto numbers fell.

This is a moment of revelation and they change things. In our readings today, one changed Isaiah, one, those who saw Jesus after the resurrection, and this one, Peter.

I think Peter understood in these few seconds that the one giving the gift was more important than the gift itself. That while the lotto win was fantastic, it palled in comparison to the one who brought the numbers forth.

I think Peter was like us. He loved money and the wonderful things it could buy. But in this moment, he came across an act of grace, a completely undeserved gift ...

... and that gift's name ... was Jesus ... and he was worth more ... than all the new houses, travel, new clothes ... and new cars in the world.

That's why ... he got up and walked away.

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But sometimes ... thanks be to God ... better gifts come along.

Amen.