

10th October, 2021.

*Sunday, Twenty-Eighth Week of Ordinary Time.
Day of Prayer to Respect Life.*

Introduction:

The call of the rich young man leads us to ponder the question of what is of true value in life? With the help of Wisdom, Hebrews, and Mark's Gospel account, our readings for this 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time, we can gain insight that certain earthly things matter little when their worth is measured in the light of heavenly or eternal satisfaction. It is in Jesus' teaching that we recognize the source of the real treasure that endures and has its home in God's eternal kingdom.

Scripture Note:

First Reading (Wisdom 7:7-11). This passage, presented as a speech of Solomon, is a hymn in praise of wisdom. Wisdom teaches us how to live rightly, and enables us to use the things of this world in a way that will help us achieve the end for which God put us on earth. Wisdom, therefore, should be prized even more than gold. This is the link with the Gospel.

Gospel (Mark 10:17-30). This is a discipleship story. Love of material possessions and comforts is one of the chief obstacles in the way of discipleship.

The Jewish people believed that the prosperity of the rich was a sign of God's blessing. But Jesus presents wealth as a stumbling block to the kingdom. Those who rely on themselves and their possessions cannot be saved. Salvation is always God's achievement, not man's. However, it is not renunciation of wealth per se but the life of discipleship that leads to eternal life.

When Jesus says, 'sell what you have ...' he doesn't mean that a disciple must be destitute. The life of the poor, with its hardship and suffering, is not set forth in Mark's Gospel as an ideal for the Christian disciple. But neither is the desire for possessions and the accumulation of wealth.

Second Reading (Hebrews 4:12-13). This reading makes use of a cluster of images and metaphors to describe the vital force of God's word. The word discerns the thoughts and intentions of the heart. The qualities of the word of God are such that there is no escape from its authority.

Reflection:

Entering the kingdom of love

Jesus invited the young man to follow him,
but riches got in the way.
Even though Jesus was sad to see him go,
nevertheless, he let him go.
There's no point in forcing people to make sacrifices.
If you take things from people, they are impoverished;
but if you can get them to give them up, they are enriched.
People are essentially good,
but this goodness has to be awakened and called forth,
if they are to enter the kingdom of love.

One-liner: Having less doesn't mean you are less!

Saints of the Week:

Monday, 11th of October: Optional Memorial of Saint John XXIII, Pope.
Thursday, 14th of October: Optional Memorial of Saint Callistus I, Pope, Martyr.
Friday, 15th of October: Memorial of Saint Teresa of Jesus, Virgin and Doctor.
Saturday, 16th of October: Optional Memorial of Saint Hedwig, Religious.
Or Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque, Virgin.

Scripture Readings for Sunday, 17th of October 2021.

Week Twenty-Nine in Ordinary Time.

Theme: Authority as service

First Reading: Isaiah 53:10-11.

Second Reading: Hebrews 4:14-16.

Gospel, Mark 10:35-45.

Homily for Sunday, 10th of October – Week Twenty-Eight in Ordinary Time - 2021.

Homily theme: The Gaze of Love

Let's take a quick look again at the situation in today's Gospel. This rich young man said to Jesus, 'What must I do to inherit eternal life?' Jesus said 'You know the Commandments'. And the rich young man said, 'I have kept all these since my earliest days'. So Jesus said, 'You need to do one thing more. Go and sell what you own and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me'.

Now let's be quite clear. Jesus was not saying that everybody has to do this. This was a special call, a very personal call for this young man. Our friend wouldn't do it. It wasn't so much that he possessed great wealth as that his wealth possessed him. He just couldn't make the sacrifice. He wasn't prepared to pay the price. It was too much.

I must say that, no matter how often I read this particular Gospel, I always feel sorry for the young man. I feel sorry for him for he meant well, his only trouble was that his money meant more to him. He's the only one in the Gospels, about whom we are told, who refused to follow Jesus. Yet his refusal is understandable. If you or I had that much money, we would find it hard to give it up too.

You might say, 'Well, he had to give it up eventually anyway. He couldn't take it with him'. And that's true. But at the time, he was faced with a stark choice. Security with Christ or security in the bank. Rely on Jesus or rely on money. He had a very difficult decision. You can only describe it as a sad but very human predicament.

Here we are in our own age on the flight path of life, being carried forward at an ever-increasing speed, but to where are we heading? The preoccupation of people at present is the Delta strain of the Covid-19 virus and its effects on our lives which is very understandable and is of real concern, the financial worries for many people, situations in our work, the effects on our young people in their education, on family problems, and of course there is the on-going saga of the political and economic issues of the day, both nationally and internationally.

We, however, for the most part are practical people. We want answers, not problems. Moral and spiritual matters we tend to consign to the 'too hard basket,' and find solace in the tranquilizing effects of trivia.

The central part of today's Gospel is not, though, what Christ said, but what Christ did to this rich young man. We read, "Jesus looked steadily at him and loved him". While the young man still kneels, his continued search is illuminated by the loving gaze of Jesus. But will he see?

Then comes the bombshell! 'Go sell everything you own and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come and follow me.'

Being good is not a sufficient condition for being a disciple of Jesus. There is something even more fundamental than goodness. But what can it be? It is the recognition of the falsehood of our claim to be rich, to have all we need.

The tragedy of the rich young man is the 'road not taken', the 'defining moment' missed, the failure to differentiate between 'riches' and 'richness'. All his life long, he was to paddle in the shallows, when the opportunity was there to launch into the deep.

May there be a lesson for us in his tragedy. May we learn something from his hesitancy. When Christ's personal call comes to us in the circumstances of our daily lives, may we have the vision and generosity to respond!

Keep praying dear people, for our Lord is all knowing and cares for us,

Fr. Brian

