

October 13, 2024
28th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Mark 10:17-30

As Jesus was setting out on a journey, a man ran up, knelt down before him, and asked him, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus answered him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: 'You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; you shall not defraud; honor your father and your mother.'" He replied and said to him, "Teacher, all of these I have observed from my youth." Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said to him, "You are lacking in one thing. Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." At that statement his face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions.

Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" The disciples were amazed at his words. So Jesus again said to them in reply, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." They were exceedingly astonished and said among themselves, "Then who can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "For human beings it is impossible, but not for God. All things are possible for God."

Peter began to say to him, "We have given up everything and followed you." Jesus said, "Amen, I say to you, there is no one who has given up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the sake of the Gospel who will not receive a hundred times more now in this present age: houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and eternal life in the age to come.

Background:

The Gospel text from last Sunday ended with Jesus telling the disciples that only those who accept the Kingdom of God like a little child will enter it. After that, Jesus embraced the children about him (Mark 10:15-16). The Gospel for this week follows.

The man who approaches Jesus does so with a gesture of respect. He is not approaching Jesus to try and trap him in an intellectual debate. He is also described as having many possessions. Two contradictory assumptions were held about the wealthy. The first is that they had gotten their wealth by taking advantage of others. This is the attitude of people toward tax collectors found in the Gospels. In contrast, wealth was also understood as a sign of being favored by God. Job's status in the beginning of the book of Job would represent that basis. Jesus for his part seems to approach wealth with his own perspective, demonstrated by his comments about the poor widow who placed her two small coins into the temple treasury.

Mark recounts this young man running up to Jesus with his question about eternal life. He comes with a question that is important to him and he seeks out Jesus for his wisdom. He is a person who is sincere in his effort to be counted among God's faithful. His sincerity is also manifested in the fact that he takes Jesus' response to his question seriously, and goes away sad because he realizes he is not as willing to respond to Jesus' challenge and invitation.

Jesus' dialogue with the disciples indicates his awareness that his teaching here is difficult for even his most faithful disciples to hear. It goes against the presumption of the day that wealth is a sign of God's favor, and the presumption that one can earn eternal life by keeping the law and traditions, or even leaving the security of home and family to become a disciple. The problem with wealth is that one learns to trust in one's own ability, which hinders one from developing a real sense of trust in God's goodness. Wealth is not the primary issue. The young man was seeking to take possession of eternal life as if it was in his power to take possession.

Peter's response to Jesus' teaching indicates the type of reaction that those who had chosen to become disciples would have to Jesus' teaching. This kind of radical dependency is not natural, especially for men of the day. Jesus seeks to reassure them that their efforts are recognized and blessed. But he also seems to indicate that eternal life, sharing in the very life of God, is not something anyone earns or is entitled to receive. It is always God's gift and must be received always as a child receives.

Reflection Questions:

1. Have you ever thought about what you might inherit? Is there a special item that has been in your family for generations or a memento that has special significance?
2. This young man wants to inherit eternal life. What does that say to you about him?
3. The text says that Jesus looked at the young man, loved him, and then addressed him. As you imagine Jesus looking at this young man with love, what thoughts and feelings do you experience?
4. Jesus tells the young man to give his possessions to the poor and he will have treasure in heaven. What do you experience within yourself when you give to the poor?
5. What are the "things" that you find most difficult letting go?
6. In the final section of the Gospel, Peter asks about those like himself who have given of their lives to become Jesus's followers. Do you ever look upon your life as having given up things to be Jesus' disciple? Is there an insight here for you?
7. Can you talk to God now about your own concerns, your hopes or fears around eternal life, or anything else that arose while praying with this Gospel?

The Gospel background and reflection questions are written by Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM. They are edited by Sister Anne Marie Lom, OSF and Joe Thiel. The excerpts from the Sunday readings are prepared by Joe Thiel. To be added to the distribution list, send your name and email address to annemarie.lom@gmail.com

Our Gospel Reflections are hosted by the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity. Their homepage is <https://fscs-calledtobe.org/>. One link there is labeled Franciscan Gospel Reflections. A click on the icon will take you to the Gospel reflections for the upcoming Sunday. By following this link, you will be able to blog or comment on the reflection questions. The material will be posted on Fridays and will be available until the following Friday when the new material is posted.

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Excerpts from the readings for October 13, 2024, the Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

I prayed, and prudence was given me; I pleaded, and the spirit of wisdom came to me. I preferred her to scepter and throne, and deemed riches nothing in comparison with her, nor did I liken any priceless gem to her; because all gold, in view of her, is a little sand, and before her, silver is to be accounted mire. Beyond health and comeliness I loved her, and I chose to have her rather than the light, because the splendor of her never yields to sleep. Yet all good things together came to me in her company, and countless riches at her hands.

Fill us with your love, O Lord, and we will sing for joy!

Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain wisdom of heart.
Return, O Lord! How long? Have pity on your servants!
Fill us at daybreak with your kindness, that we may shout for joy and gladness all our days.
Make us glad, for the days when you afflicted us, for the years when we saw evil.
Let your work be seen by your servants and your glory by their children;
and may the gracious care of the Lord our God be ours; prosper the work of our hands for us!

Brothers and sisters: Indeed the word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating between soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and able to discern thoughts of the heart. No creature is concealed from him; everything is exposed to him to whom we must render an account.

A man asked Jesus, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"
Jesus answered him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone.
You know the commandments: You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; you shall not defraud; honor your father and your mother."
He replied, "All of these I have observed from my youth." Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, "You are lacking in one thing. Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." At that his face fell. He went away sad, for he had many possessions.
Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" The disciples were amazed at his words.
Jesus again said, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."
They were exceedingly astonished and said among themselves, "Then who can be saved?"
Jesus said, "For human beings it is impossible, but not for God. All things are possible for God."
Peter began to say to him, "We have given up everything and followed you."
Jesus said, "Amen, I say to you, there is no one who has given up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the sake of the Gospel who will not receive a hundred times more now in this present age: houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and eternal life in the age to come."

Excerpts from Wisdom 7:7-11; Psalm 90:12-17; Hebrews 4:12-13; and Mark 10:17-30

Friends,

Here are the Gospel background and reflection questions for October 13th, as prepared by Franciscan spiritual director Fr. Paul Gallagher. In the opening part of the Gospel from Mark, Jesus responds to a man who asks, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" He tells him that beyond keeping the commandments, he is lacking only to "sell what you have, and give to the poor, and then come, follow me." The man, who had many possessions, went away sad. In the second part Jesus tells the disciples, "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich one to enter the kingdom of God. For human beings it is impossible, but all things are possible for God."

The other readings have additional references to riches, prosperity, wisdom, and the penetrating and discerning word of God. The first reading from Wisdom describes how wisdom is preferable to any riches and other comforts. "All gold, in view of her, is a little sand." Psalm 90 requests wisdom from the Lord, and his kindness and care, "Let your work be seen by your servants; prosper the work of our hands!" In the second reading, from the letter to the Hebrews, "The word of God is living and effective, sharper than any sword, penetrating between soul and spirit, and joints and marrow, discerning the thoughts of the heart."

At the end of today's Gospel, Jesus teaches that "Whoever has given up what they treasured for my sake and for the Gospel will receive a hundred times more in this present age, with persecutions, ..." The words of the psalm

also reflect that reference to persecutions: "Make us glad, for the days of afflictions, for the years when we saw evil, that we may shout for joy and gladness all our days." And in the second reading, "Nothing is concealed from him, everything is exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must render an account." The first reading too suggests that the good comes after trials. "I chose to have wisdom rather than (scepter, throne, riches, gems, health) even the light, because the splendor of her never yields to sleep. Yet all good things together came to me in her company." The promise is in the rest of that closing sentence from the Gospel: "... and they will receive eternal life in the age to come."

Joe

> i < May the Word light your way each day!