

GOSPEL
Mark 10:17-30

Jesus was setting out on a journey when a man ran up, knelt before him and put this question to him, ‘Good master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?’ Jesus said to him, ‘Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: You must not kill; You must not commit adultery; You must not steal; You must not bring false witness; You must not defraud; Honour your father and mother.’ And he said to him, ‘Master, I have kept all these from my earliest days.’ Jesus looked steadily at him and loved him, and he said, ‘There is one thing you lack. Go and sell everything you own and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.’ But his face fell at these words and he went away sad, for he was a man of great wealth.

Jesus looked round and said to his disciples, ‘How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!’ The disciples were astounded by these words, but Jesus insisted, ‘My children,’ he said to them, ‘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 a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.’ They were more astonished than ever. ‘In that case’ they said to one another, ‘who can be saved?’ Jesus gazed at them. ‘For men’ he said, ‘it is impossible, but not for God: because everything is possible for God.’

Peter took this up. ‘What about us?’ he asked him. ‘We have left everything and followed you.’ Jesus said, ‘I tell you solemnly, there is no one who has left house, brothers, sisters, father, children or land for my sake and for the sake of the gospel who will not be repaid a hundred times over, houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and land – not without persecutions – now in this present time and, in the world to come, eternal life.’

A REFLECTION BY POPE BENEDICT XVI
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The main theme of this Sunday’s Gospel (Mk 10:17-30) is wealth. Jesus teaches that it is very difficult for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God, but not impossible; in fact, God can win over the heart of a person who has

great possessions and spur him or her to solidarity and sharing with the needy, with the poor, to entering, that is, the logic of giving. In this way he places himself on the path of Jesus Christ who, as the Apostle Paul writes — “though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich” (2 Cor 8:9).

As often happens in the Gospel, it all started with a meeting: that of Jesus with someone who “had great possessions” (Mk 10:22). He was a person who had faithfully observed from his youth all the commandments of God’s Law, but had not yet found true happiness; and this is why he asks Jesus what he should do “to inherit eternal life” (v. 17). On the one hand he is attracted, as everyone is, by the fullness of life; on the other, being used to relying on his wealth, he thinks that eternal life can in some way “be purchased”, perhaps even by observing a special commandment.

Jesus, however, understands the deep desire that exists in this person and, the Evangelist notes, turns a loving gaze on him: the gaze of God (cf. v. 21). However, Jesus also realizes what the weak point of that man is: his very attachment to his many possessions; and so he proposes that the man give it all to the poor in order that his treasure — and hence his heart — will no longer be on earth but in heaven, and he adds: “Come, follow me” (v. 21). But, instead of accepting Jesus’ invitation joyfully, the man went away sorrowfully (cf. v. 22) because he can not break away from his riches, that will never give him happiness and eternal life.

It is at this point that Jesus gives his disciples — and us too today — his teaching: “How hard it will be for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!” (v. 23). The disciples were dismayed at his words; and especially after Jesus added: “it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God”. However, seeing the astonished, he said: “With men it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God” (cf. vv. 24-27).

St Clement of Alexandria commented: “Let [the parable] teach the prosperous that they are not to neglect their own salvation, as if they had been already

foredoomed, nor, on the other hand, to cast wealth into the sea, or condemn it as a traitor and an enemy to life, but learn in what way and how to use wealth and obtain life” (Who is the Rich Man That Shall Be Saved, 27, 1-2).

The history of the Church is full of examples of rich people who used their possessions in an evangelical way, even attaining holiness. Let us only think of St Francis, St Elizabeth of Hungary or St Charles Borromeo. May the Virgin Mary, Seat of Wisdom, help us to accept Jesus’ invitation joyfully, in order to enter the fullness of life.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you from the Gospel or Reflection/ Homily?



Head: Why do you think it is so difficult to "break away from... riches, that will never give [us] happiness and eternal life"? Why do you think riches can have such a hold on us?



Heart: What can we learn from Jesus' decision to gaze on the rich man with love? If you were this man, what effect would a response of love rather than judgement have on you?



Hands: What might we do to develop a healthy relationship with earthly treasure – wealth, goods, relationships?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another:

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (for example, “Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray”)
3. Offer prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others’ prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps praying the ‘Glory Be’.