

Connecting with the Sunday Readings

**Twenty-eighth Sunday
in Ordinary Time** **Gospel Word**
Mark 10:17-30

The story of the rich man who came to Jesus seeking a better way of life for himself is one of the most memorable stories in the Gospel. Maybe that's because most of us can easily identify with this good-hearted man who really wanted to do more, but realized the invitation to sell all that he had and give the money to the poor was just too difficult. Actually the rich man is only one part of today's Gospel. There are two other parts: Jesus teaching his disciples how difficult it is for a rich man to enter the Kingdom; and teaching about the rewards of giving up riches in response to Peter's questions: "What about us, who have given everything up?"

Jesus looked on the rich man with love. He was obviously moved by the man's willingness and the sincerity of his question, and so he extends the invitation to him to become a disciple. It is important to understand that in Jewish religious culture, wealth was seen as a sign of God's favor and with it came an obligation to give alms to the poor—which was an honor. Part of the man's dilemma was that to follow Jesus' invitation he would have to give up not only his possessions, but also the privilege of giving alms. It would make him absolutely and totally dependent on God. It was too hard. In his instruction to the disciples, they are amazed not so much at the image of the camel and the needle but that Jesus is pulling the rug out from under the idea that riches are a sign of God's favor. That would be an amazing statement for them. They thought for sure the rich would be saved!

The other amazing part of the conversation was Jesus' response to Peter when he says that the rewards to those who do follow his invitation will be great not just in the next world but here and now. They are the riches of the rewards from living in community with other disciples.

—by David Thomas, PhD, Co-Director, The Bethany Family Institute

Living the Word

There is a story told about an unsuccessful Arctic expedition made by a group of English explorers. One of the problems they faced was that they carried a large amount of supplies with them as they trekked across the desolate snow and ice-covered landscape. Later it was learned that among their possessions was a large silver service, and also enough delicate china for a large number of people. Their problem is obvious: they didn't travel light. Travel light, and your chances of a successful trip are better. That might be a way of looking at how to live out the message of today's Gospel reading.

Attachment and detachment are attitudes and habits of the heart for disciples. We should be attached to God and what God's will is for us. The rest we wear lightly like a loose garment. Being unencumbered with earthly possessions allows one greater freedom to connect with God. Material possessions are not bad or evil in themselves but they have a way of demanding our time, our thoughts, and our energy, and we become diverted from what is really important in life.

One-line Prayer

Perfect God, give us generous hearts and the freedom to live with great love for others.
Amen.