

# Scripture Study

Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time—Cycle B



## Opening prayer

Wisdom 7:7-11

(Psalm 90:12-17)

Hebrews 4:12-13

Mark 10:17-30

## Overview of the Gospel:

- Jesus is preparing to leave the area of Galilee “beyond the Jordan” on his way to Jerusalem (Mark 10:10, 17, 32). He continues his instruction on discipleship.
- Jesus is approached by a man (Matthew tells us he is a *young* man, Matthew 19:20) who asks what he must do to enter the Kingdom of Heaven (verse 17). We find out later that this young man is also rich (v. 22). At the time, wealth was considered to be a sign of divine favor, if not election.
- Jesus cites to him the last seven of the Ten Commandments—the ones having to do with love of neighbor (Exodus 20:2-17; Deuteronomy 5:6-21. He also adds a prohibition against fraud which, while not one of the Ten Commandments, may be inferred from Deuteronomy 24:14.). The rich young man assures Jesus that he has kept these from his youth.
- Jesus, looking into this young man’s heart, sees something there that will cause him to be the only one in the Gospels to refuse a personal call from the Lord.

## Questions:

- In the 1<sup>st</sup> Reading, the writer is asking for wisdom, a gift he knows should be prized above all gifts. What kind of things does God want us to value and ask him for? What kind of things do I ask of God in my prayer time?
- In light of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading, how do you approach the reading of Scripture or homilies at Mass? Can you think of any occasions when hearing God’s word helped to reveal intentions that had lain buried, perhaps for years?
- In questioning the rich young man’s address to him as “good teacher,” and pointing out that “no one is good but God alone,” is Jesus denying his divinity, or affirming it? Why or why not?
- Jesus quizzes the young man on only a partial list of the 10 Commandments (see Exodus 20). How well might the man obeyed the one’s not mentioned—those relating directly to God?
- Why does Jesus command the man as he does (verse 21; see also Mark 8:34)? What does the man’s response reveal about what was incomplete about his good works?
- What does the disciple’s shock reveal about them? On what basis is it possible for anyone to receive the Kingdom?
- How many possessions do you have? How do they affect your relationship with Jesus? How dismayed are you when he asks you to give them up? Aside from riches, what is the “one thing” (verse 21)—friends, job, lifestyle, free time—that keeps you from completely following Jesus?
- Are you more like the children we read about last week (Mark 10:13-16) or the rich young man in terms of the way you approach God?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 2068, 2072, 1858, 1618, 2082

## Closing prayer

*Riches are not forbidden, but the pride of them is.* –St. John Chrysostom

**Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings found in the bulletin!**

# "You will have treasure in heaven"

**Scripture:** Mark 10:17-30

**Meditation:** What gives hope and satisfaction to our desire for happiness and security? A young man who had the best the world could offer – wealth and security – came to Jesus because he lacked one thing. He wanted the kind of lasting peace and happiness which money could not buy him. The answer he got, however, was not what he was looking for. He protested that he kept all the commandments; but Jesus spoke to the trouble in his heart. One thing kept him from giving himself whole-heartedly to God. While he lacked nothing in material goods, he was nonetheless possessive of what he had. He placed his hope and security in what he possessed. So when Jesus challenged him to make God his one true possession and treasure, he became dismayed. Why did he go away from Jesus with sadness rather than with joy? His treasure and his hope for happiness were misplaced. Jesus challenged the young man because his heart was possessive. He was afraid to give to others for fear that he would lose what he had gained. He sought happiness and security in what he possessed rather than in who he could love and serve and give himself in undivided devotion.

Why does Jesus call his disciples to "sell all" for the treasure of his kingdom? *Treasure* has a special connection to the heart, the place of desire and longing, the place of will and focus. The thing we most set our heart on is our highest treasure. The Lord himself is the greatest treasure we can have. Giving up everything else to have the Lord as our treasure is not sorrowful, but the greatest joy. [See Jesus' parable about the treasure hidden in a field in Matthew 13:44.] Selling all that we have could mean many different things –



letting go of attachments, friendships, influences, jobs, entertainments, styles of life – really anything that might stand in the way of our loving God first and foremost in our lives and giving him the best we can with our time, resources, gifts, and service.

Those who are generous towards God and towards their neighbor find that they cannot out give God in his generosity towards us. God blesses us with the priceless treasures of his kingdom – freedom from fear and the gripping power of sin, selfishness and pride which block his love and grace in our lives; freedom from loneliness, isolation and rejection which keep his children from living together in love, peace, and unity; and freedom from hopelessness, despair, and disillusionment which blind our vision of God's power to heal every hurt, bind every wound, and remove every blemish which mar the image of God within us. God offers us treasure which money cannot buy. He alone can truly satisfy the deepest longing and desires of our heart. Are you willing to part with anything that might keep you from seeking true joy with Jesus?

Why does Jesus issue such a strong warning to the rich (as well as to the rest of us who desire to be rich)? Was he really against wealth? We know that Jesus was not opposed to wealth per se, nor was he opposed to the wealthy. He had many friends who were well-to-do, including

some notorious tax collectors! One even became an apostle! Jesus' warning reiterated the teaching of the Old Testament wisdom: *Better is a poor man who walks in his integrity than a rich man who is perverse in his ways* (Proverbs 28:6; see also Psalm 37:16). *Do not wear yourself out to get rich; be wise enough to desist* (Proverbs 23:4). Jesus seems to say that it is nearly impossible for the rich to live as citizens of God's kingdom. Why is Jesus so cautious about wealth? Wealth can make us falsely independent. The church at Laodicea was warned about their attitude towards wealth and a false sense of security: "For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing" (Revelations 3:17). Wealth can also lead us into hurtful desires and selfishness (see 1 Timothy 6:9-10). Look at the lesson Jesus gave about the rich man and his sons who refused to aid the poor man Lazarus (see Luke 16:19ff). They also neglected to serve God. The scriptures give us a paradox: we lose what we keep and we gain what we give away. Generosity will be amply repaid, both in this life and in eternity (Proverbs 3:9-10, Luke 6:38). Jesus offers us an incomparable treasure which no money can buy and no thief can steal. The thing we most set our heart on is our highest treasure. Material wealth will shackle us to this earth unless we guard our hearts and set our treasure on God and his everlasting kingdom. Where is your treasure?

*"Lord Jesus, you have captured our hearts and opened to us the treasures of heaven. May you always be my treasure and delight and may nothing else keep me from giving you my all."*

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