

**ECHOING GOD’S WORD
IN
THE CATHOLIC FAITH COMMUNITY
TWENTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**

October 13, 2024

SCRIPTURES:

Wisdom 7:7-11	Wisdom is God’s greatest gift.
Hebrews 4:12-13	Christians are tested as were the Israelites.
Mark 10:17-30	Discipleship requires a total commitment.
Psalms 90: 12-17	Prayer for God’s compassion.

SCRIPTURE BACKGROUND:

Wisdom:

Written in Greek at Alexandria about 100 years before the coming of Christ, this book does not appear in the Hebrew Bible. Wisdom literature was part of the teachings of devout Jews who spoke Greek in non-Palestinian Jewish communities. The wisdom of the Jewish heritage was presented as superior to Greek philosophy. Attributed to King Solomon, who lived at least 900 years before its writing, the Book of Wisdom claims that God has a saving and gracious purpose in allowing his people to suffer.

Hebrews:

The author draws a parallel between the deliverance of Israel by Moses from slavery in Egypt and the deliverance of the faithful from sin and eternal death by Jesus Christ. Waiting now for the final entry into the Promised Land of heaven, Christians are being tested by temptation as were the people of Israel in the wilderness. The Book of Hebrews was written for Jewish Christians who needed further instruction after their baptism. Having been schooled in the Law of Moses, they are instructed to take the message of Jesus as a further law.

Mark:

The Gospel of Mark most often focuses on the issue of discipleship and its consequences. In the matter of riches, the question is: “What affect does wealth have on discipleship?” The question is not about money but about commitment to Jesus Christ on the part of those who have money.

Jesus connects goodness with godliness, without rejecting the attribution of goodness to himself. Today, we know that Jesus did not rule out goodness, nor did he rule out godliness when referring to himself.

Having observed all of the law, the man who approached Jesus nonetheless sensed a need for salvation beyond observance of the law. Jesus tells him to settle his worldly responsibilities and then to do the one thing that is necessary for salvation: become a disciple. The point of the

whole passage comes to following Jesus unreservedly. Saint Francis of Assisi and others have taken literally the invitation of Jesus to put discipleship first.

The only place in Mark where it is said that Jesus loved someone comes as an affirmation to all who have made the commitment of discipleship: Jesus loves us just as he loved that man whom he called to that special relationship.

Let us not quibble over arcane interpretations of what is meant by “the eye of the needle.” It is sufficient that we acknowledge that God can make the impossible possible. Isn’t that what the context suggests in the first place? Some say that there was a narrow gate in Jerusalem’s wall where camels had to be unloaded in order to be admitted. It was called the “Eye of the Needle.”

God has made salvation possible for us. It was impossible for us to do that for ourselves. Salvation is a “grace,” a free gift from God. Salvation cannot be “earned” by our good works. Salvation is a gift from God, totally unmerited. God gives salvation to all whom God chooses. We have passed through the eye of the needle!

Jesus loves us, too, just as he loved the man here mentioned.

PRAYER

Pray together all of Psalm 90 at the end of your discussion.

O Lord, you have been our refuge through all generations.
Before the mountains were begotten
and the earth and the world were brought forth,
from everlasting to everlasting, you are God.
You turn people back to dust,
saying, “Return, O children of men.” Et Cetera.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Discuss the many ways in which our culture is at odds with the values suggested by Jesus for those who would become his disciples. How can we best oppose the principles of society that distract us from Christ’s Gospel? Do we fight a war with modern times? Can we “baptize” the culture in which we live? How much can we accommodate to modern times?

2. Do you believe that we have watered down the conditions for Christian discipleship because we have found them difficult (impossible!)? What do you think has been changed to make following Christ easier? Which conditions do you think should be restored to their original integrity? Do you want to live like Saint Francis of Assisi?

3. Describe the witness value of the life of a disciple like Saint Teresa of Calcutta who had chosen to live among and serve the “poorest of the poor.” Even if we do not follow her literally, does she present a value that we need to hear? How can we best live up to her example in the places and times where we are?

CATHOLIC DOCTRINE

In a society that accentuates the value and role of the individual, we often lose sight of the fact that Jesus called his disciples into fellowship with him but also into community with one another. The Church is not an optional feature for the followers of Jesus. The invitation that we received from Jesus to become his disciples is, at the same time, an invitation to fellowship and ministry in the Church. We cannot separate the one from the other.

The Church, as a visible entity in the world, testifies to the Gospel of salvation for all men, women, and children. By its very existence, the community of faith proclaims that God's love is offered to all who would willingly receive it. "If God can love the likes of us, surely God will love you!"

Evangelization begins when we who are Catholics have come to a deeper awareness of the gift of faith that we have received; when we become willing to boldly live out the implications of the Gospel: love, peace, and justice for all.

Disciples of the Lord are chosen in every generation to bear witness to the love of God in their own lives and to the mercy that they have been shown by the Lord. All who believe in Jesus Christ are disciples. Like the early believers, we, too, have heard the good news that Jesus has been raised to life in Easter glory, that his saving death and resurrection have won us eternal redemption, that he has sent the Holy Spirit upon us to enable us to do works of service for the salvation of others.

Disciples are responsible for receiving, preserving, and handing on the message of Jesus Christ. All the disciples are responsible for these ministries. When we say that the Church is responsible, we are saying that we are all responsible together. There is no Church other than all of us. To paraphrase Buckminster Fuller, "There are no passengers in the spaceship Church; we are all crew." Parishioners need to be reminded that the parish is us; it is not just those up front or in the parish offices! We are crew. We operate the ship that is the Church. Surely, there are God-appointed leaders. But laypersons share in the leadership function, too.

Disciples, of course, need to remember that their Master was crucified and died. We, too, must take up our crosses daily, living and following him.

See: The Catechism # 425, 542, 618, 645, 647, 730, 1816

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