

Weekend Readings & Reflections

October 9-10, 2021 – Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reflection: *The rich young man in today's Gospel wants to know what we all want to know—how to live in this life so that we might live forever in the world to come. He seeks what today's Psalm calls "wisdom of heart." He learns that the wisdom he seeks is not a program of works to be performed or behaviors to be avoided. As Jesus tells him, observing the commandments is essential to walking the path of salvation—but it can only get us so far. The Wisdom of God is not precepts, but a person—Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Wisdom whose Spirit was granted to Solomon in today's First Reading. Jesus is the Word of God spoken of in today's Epistle. And Jesus, as He reveals Himself to the rich man today, is God. In Jesus we encounter Wisdom, the living and effective Word of God. As He does with the rich man today, He looks upon each of us with love. That look of love, that loving gaze, is a personal invitation—to give up everything to follow Him. Nothing is concealed from His gaze, as we hear in the Epistle. In His fiery eyes, the thoughts of our hearts are exposed, and each of us must render an account of our lives (see [Revelation 1:14](#)). We must have the attitude of Solomon, preferring Wisdom to all else, loving Him more than even life itself. This preference, this love, requires a leap of faith. We will be persecuted for this faith; Jesus tells His disciples today. But we must trust in His promise—that all good things will come to us in His company. What, then, are the "many possessions" that keep us from giving ourselves totally to God? What are we clinging to—material things, comfort zones, relationships? What will it take for us to live fully for Christ's sake and the sake of the Gospel? Let us pray for the wisdom to enter into the kingdom of God. With the Psalmist, let us ask Him, "Teach us."*

OPENING PRAYER

Leader: Welcome to our study for the Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time. Let us begin in prayer:

All: O Lord God almighty, who has brought to us to the beginning of this day, defend us in the same by Your power; that we may not this day fall into any sin, but that all our thoughts, words, and works may be directed to the fulfillment of Your will. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, world without end. Amen.

Leader: *Jesus offers us the way to eternal life in today's Gospel. We must not only follow the Commandments and omit sin from our lives, but also, we must surrender our entire lives to Christ and thereby follow him. We must reject our inordinate attachments to Christ. This process is much easier said than done, because we can easily become consumed by worldly goods and affairs. These things very easily distract us from Jesus. How often do you desire to pray, but end up spending time perusing news, social media, and email on your phone? We often say we want to follow Christ, but we cannot seem to fit in ten minutes of prayer time with him a day, while we easily make time for an hour to work out or spend time watching movies. Jesus is inviting us to walk on the road of the straight and narrow. He doesn't promise it will be easy; in fact, it will be quite the opposite. He says that it is impossible for men to follow this path alone, but with God, all things will be possible. Do you give inordinate time to the things of this world? Where do you think you will find happiness? What is holding you back from following Christ completely and sacrificially? Contemplate these questions as we listen to Annie Powell unlock the Scriptures for us.*

Empty Promises

Satan convinced Eve that God was not good or trustworthy, and was withholding things from her and Adam. He was able to make Eve believe that instead of finding our happiness in God, it could be found other places. God was just "holding back" on us; this is why He didn't want them to eat of the fruit of the forbidden tree, because then they would become like Him and know good and evil. Do we fall into this same trap? Do we let Satan convince us that we could be completely fulfilled by something or someone other than God? Do we become so focused on a material goal that we miss the love that God is waiting to share with us, to fill us with his joy and abundant grace? What "goal" or ideal is distracting you from loving God completely?

FIRST READING ~ Wisdom 7:7-11 ~

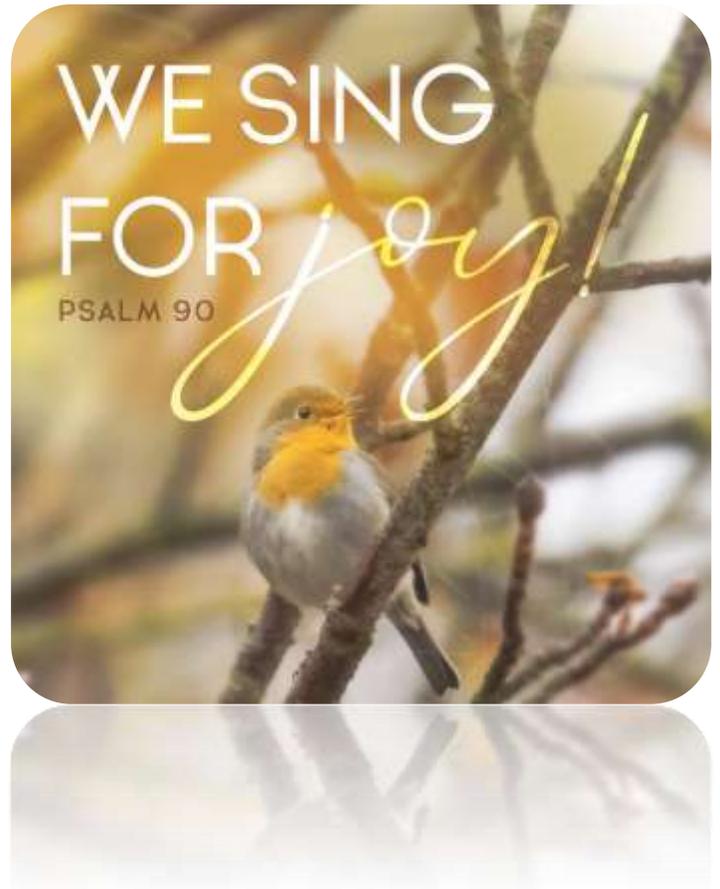
I prayed, and prudence was given me; I pleaded, and the spirit of wisdom came to me. I preferred her to scepter and throne, and deemed riches nothing in comparison with her, nor did I liken any priceless gem to her; because all gold, in view of her, is a little sand, and before her, silver is to be accounted 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.

The Book of Wisdom is thought to have been written by King Solomon. Today's text links to the story of young King Solomon, newly married to a princess of Egypt, heavily aware of leadership responsibilities and following the example of his Father, King David. In 1 Kings 3:6-9 Solomon prays for wisdom - a heart to understand what is good and what is evil. Today is Solomon's reflection on just what a precious gift wisdom is.

- *Have you ever needed to search for and find a wise person to offer direction and guidance? How would you describe your need? What happened?*

'I chose to have her rather than the light'. Wisdom is not a possession or equal to worldly wealth of gold or silver. It is the spiritual gift of knowing the truth and the very will of God. Discernment of God's will is a discipleship skill. It literally means 'to cut away'.

- *Consider a choice that you need to make. List the choices. Pray for wisdom. 'Cut away' options that are shallow or not spiritually motivated. Pay attention to the desire beneath the choice. What advice would you ask for or give to someone in this situation? Anything you would like to share with the group in a choice you need to make?*



SECOND READING ~ 2 Hebrews 4:12-13 ~

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

Hebrews is written for Jewish Christians struggling with persecution and the difficulties and fragility of the early Christian church. They remembered with joy the clear Jewish laws and customs and the sacrificial practices of the Temple. The author of Hebrews points them to the penetrating power of the Word.

- *Have you ever experienced the powerful and personal way the scriptures can reach deeply inside you and speak to your deepest pain and questions? Reveal you to yourself? Challenge you? Inspire you? What scripture passage has done this for you? What happened?*

• **GOSPEL** ~ 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."

- *What can we do this week to live the truth of the Gospel more fully?*

The theme of wisdom is contrasted with wealth in the Gospel. A rich young man faithful to the laws still finds himself unsatisfied in life. His question: 'what must I do?' is still focused on external actions of obedience. Jesus wishes to lead him from observance of laws to living in love. The invitation to change the base of his security from possessions to treasure in heaven causes his face to fall.

- *What possessions would you be terrified of letting go? Why? Do you trust that God will supply everything you need?*

The invitation to a deeper discipleship does not necessarily require letting go of wealth but letting go of its attachment. Jesus uses an image. To get a camel loaded with items for trade through a narrow gate in Jerusalem required unloading items, the camel sometimes having to kneel down and crawl through a small space (eye of a needle).

- *How would you describe your use of wealth? Is it available for building the Kingdom of God? The needs of the poor? How much security and life does your bank balance or possessions bring you?*
- *What does this story reveal to you personally?*
- *Jesus asks us to love him today above all else. He asks us to put aside our personal habits and way of life, and even perhaps our bodily life, for him. Are you willing to follow him and love him in this radical way?*

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 (Mark 10:17-27). 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 sad.

Why did he go away from Jesus with great sorrow and 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.

Those who are generous towards God and towards their neighbor find that they cannot outmatch 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.

Jesus did not hesitate to tell his disciples that they can expect both blessing from God and persecution from the world which is opposed to God and his ways. We should neither be surprised nor fear those who try to intimidate us or oppose us when we take a stand for God's kingdom of truth and righteousness. No earthly reward or treasure can outmatch the joy and bliss of knowing God's love, mercy, and peace and the joy of knowing that our names are written in heaven where we will dwell with God forever.

- *Do you know the joy of the Lord and the treasure he has stored up for us in heaven? Are you willing to part with anything that might keep you from seeking true joy with Jesus?*

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: In closing, let us pray ...

ALL: 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. Amen.

Leader: (if time, let us offer up our intercessions ... St. Michael... Our Father... Hail Mary... Glory Be...)

[Opening reflection was shared from St. Paul Center at <https://stpaulcenter.com/studies-tools/sunday-bible-reflections>]

[video can be found at FORMED.ORG "Opening the Word". Additional reflections can be found at FORMED in "Opening the Word"]

[Discussion questions created by Fr Frank Bird sm, Marist Priest, and distributed by www.maristlaitynz.org, were shared with permission from www.livingtheword.org.nz.]

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