

Our Sunday Readings

WISDOM 7:7-11
 PSALM 90:12-17
 HEBREWS 4:12-13
 MARK 10:17-30 (or 17-27)

What Money Can't Buy

WISDOM 7:7-11

Reading closely

1. How does the speaker elevate wisdom?
2. How confident is the speaker in his claims?
3. What is wisdom?
4. What happens to the speaker?
5. If the speaker were writing today, what things might he list?
6. How do you think the speaker sought wisdom?

Living the word

7. What does our culture value?
8. Does our culture value wisdom?
9. How do you seek wisdom?

THE FIRST READING

King Solomon

Although the Book of Wisdom was written during the 2nd-1st century BC, at times the author writes in the person of King Solomon, who reigned during the 10th century BC. Solomon became renowned for his wisdom because he transformed Israel into a dominant economic and military power. The religious and cultural life of Israel flourished during his reign.

Having it all

In this passage Solomon prays for wisdom, which is better than anything else he could possess, including

- his reign (v.8a)
- gems, gold, and silver (vv.8b-9)
- health and beauty (v.10a)
- a long life (v.10b)

These things have no value compared to wisdom. Wisdom lasts forever. Plus, by living wisely, Solomon gained both power and material wealth (v.11).

Lady Wisdom

In the Bible wisdom is personified as a woman, Lady Wisdom. The reason for this is simply the style of the literature: it was written for young men. Men were to seek Lady Wisdom just as they would seek a mature, intelligent, and upstanding woman to be their wife.

*I prayed, and prudence was given me;
 I pleaded, and the spirit of Wisdom
 came to me.*

MARK 10:17-30

Reading closely

1. Where is Jesus going?
2. Why do you think the man approaches Jesus?
3. Why does he kneel?
4. Why might Jesus have not wanted to be called *good*?
5. How might the man have felt when he heard Jesus' first response (v.19)?
6. What might Jesus have thought and felt about the man?
7. Why is the man sad when he hears Jesus' second response (v.21)?
8. Do you think the man ever gave up his wealth?
9. Why do you think Peter says he and the other disciples have given up everything (v.28)?
10. How do you think the disciples felt when they heard what Jesus promised (v.29)?
11. What could *with persecutions* mean?

Living the word

12. Why does wealth make it hard for people to follow Christ?
13. What has been hard for you to give up?
14. What have you gained by following Jesus?

THE GOSPEL READING

Scary prospects

Last Sunday, while talking about children, Jesus made it clear that eternal life is a gift from God and not something we earn. The same point runs through this story of an upstanding Jew who's genuinely respectful of Jesus and eager to grow in his spiritual life.

Back then (and rather like today) wealth enhanced a person's social status and ensured that their needs (and wants) were met. People also thought that wealth was a sign of God's favor.

When the rich man declares that he's always followed God's law, Jesus calls him to a new way of life. Jesus invites the man to give away his social status, his economic security, and the notion that God has favored him over others. Jesus wants the man to receive God's kingdom as a child, as one who has nothing and so is open to all that God offers.

Note: "Why do you call me good?"

We don't know why Jesus didn't want to be called *good*. Maybe he was simply being humble. Maybe he wanted the focus of his ministry to be on God and not on himself.

What's down is up... (vv.23-27)

The rich man is too dependent upon or trusting of his wealth to give it up. He can't accept what Jesus has said about God's kingdom: God's kingdom is a gift, and if God favors anyone, he favors society's weakest, poorest members.

The disciples are equally startled when Jesus warns them against wealth. His vivid hyperbole turns conventional wisdom on its head. There is no lasting security in wealth. Money doesn't prove God's favor and certainly can't buy it. Wealth can even prevent us from whole-heartedly following Jesus, as the rich man's choice shows.

A new family (vv.28-30)

Although it may seem like we only lose if we give up things and even relationships in order to become disciples, we actually gain far more. Jesus promises that his followers will gain a new family that is founded on him. Unlike relationships that are established through wealth, this new family doesn't require payment. Better yet, our new family is ours forever.

PRAYER

adapted from Wisdom 9

God of our fathers,
 LORD of mercy,
 with you is Wisdom, who knows your works
 and was present when you made the world.
 Send her forth from your holy heavens
 that she may be with us and work with us.
 She will guide us so that we may know your will.
 She will counsel us so that we will make just and
 holy choices.
 She will protect us in all that we do
 so that our feet will not stray from the path you
 have set for us. Amen.