Our Sunday Readings

Possessions

**Wisdom 7:7-11**

*Reading closely*

1. How does the speaker elevate wisdom?
2. How confident is the speaker in his claims?
3. What happens to the speaker?
4. If the speaker were writing today, what all might he list as being incomparable to wisdom?
5. How do you think the speaker sought wisdom?
6. How would you define 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 second to first century BC, at times the author writes in the person of King Solomon, who reigned during the tenth 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 he declares 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)

Compared to wisdom, these things have no value and are impermanent. Moreover, by living wisely, Solomon gained power, prestige, and material wealth (v.11).

*Lady Wisdom*

In the Bible wisdom is personified as a woman, Lady Wisdom. The reason for this is much of the biblical wisdom tradition was written for men, especially young men. Men were to seek Lady Wisdom just as they would seek an 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. Why do you think the man approaches Jesus?
2. Why do you think the man kneels?
3. Why do you think Jesus doesn’t want to be called good?
4. How might the man feel when he hears Jesus’ first response (v.19)?
5. What all might Jesus think and feel about the man?
6. Why do you think Jesus tells the man to give away everything he has?
7. What all do you think the man feels as he hears Jesus’ second response (v.21)?
8. Do you think the man ever gives up his wealth?
9. Why do you think Peter says he and the other disciples have given up everything?
10. How do you think the disciples react when they hear what Jesus promises?

Living the word
11. Why does wealth make it hard for people to follow Christ?
12. What has been hard for you to give up?
13. How sincerely are you 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 this upstanding Jew who is 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 a person’s 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 more attuned 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 seems too dependent on 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 the weakest, poorest members of society.

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 reaction 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.

THE PRAYER

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, and from your glorious throne dispatch her, that she may be with us and work with us.
May she guide us so that we will know your will.
May she counsel us so that we will make just and holy choices.
May she accompany us in all that we do so that our feet will not stray from the way of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

PRAYE

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, and from your glorious throne dispatch her, that she may be with us and work with us.
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