

Mark 10:17-31

St Francis was asked once why he and his order didn't have any possessions, any wealth?

His reply was: If we had any wealth we also needed Guards and Laws to defend it.

The Gospel story tackles an age old question?

What happens when we die? How do we get eternal life vs. eternal damnation? How do we get saved? What do we need to do?

Now the rich man that comes to Jesus is a sad story. Its sad because the story doesn't have a happy end. Usually when Jesus asks someone to follow him, that person drops everything and follows him; not so in this case ...

The man leaves shocked and is grieving!

His question was: How to inherit eternal life?

He was one of the good guys; as we heard, he had kept all the commandments. Somewhere he must have felt that there was maybe more than 'just' keeping the commandments, why would he have asked otherwise? It reads that Jesus loved him.

And so Jesus tells him what he is lacking: Give everything you have to the poor and then follow me!

The question here is who or what is ruling our heart? Is it Christ? Or is it our riches and possessions? Put in different terms: Do we follow God or do we follow the mammon? – the god of riches and possessions!

What St Francis was referring to was that as soon as they had possessions those possessions would start to rule their life; they suddenly needed guards and laws and locks and they would spent more and more time making sure that they stayed rich ... and all of that time and energy would just take them away from following Christ.

No possessions meant: nothing much to worry about loosing anything.

What Christ is talking here about is the difference between 'to have' and 'to be'!

The rich man had accomplished a lot, he had kept a wealth of commandments and was ready to add a few more to the list of his accomplishments. He was trying hard to make it!

So Jesus answer, that only God is good, puts the first damper on the rich mans accomplishments ...if Jesus is not calling himself good, how can he expect to be called good despite the fact that he kept all the commandments.

Jesus makes this abundantly clear a little later when he tells the disciples that it is impossible for mortals to save themselves.

And this is the first point in today's Gospel:

We can not earn eternal life ... we can not make it an accomplishment of ours to be saved; to have eternal life ... it just can not be bought.

So contrary to what we do with our life's to secure ourselves a good living; Different rules apply to eternal life ...different rules apply to Christ...to God!

Eternal life can not be bought, it a gift, given to faith in grace!

The price we are to pay are the two great commandments:

Love God with all your heart, your might, your strength ...your whole being.
And love your neighbor as you love yourself.

In other words: the price we pay following Christ is that we love nothing more than God in our hearts.

And whatever distracts us from loving God ... Christ would consider a possession we need to get rid of.

In Love there is no fear! What I have found in my work as a Priest is that what distracts us the most from loving God is Fear; and all it siblings: anxiety, worries, being afraid and the likes (sometimes it seems easier to get money from people than for them to let their fears go.)

In Love is no Fear Following Christ means to get rid of all the things that separate us from that Love: whatever possession it may be! The more we stop resisting God's love the more Love is in us and that Love from God Inherits eternal life. What saves us is God's Love growing in us!

That is the kingdom, an early partaking in the eternal life.

(Let us pray today's collect again)

Lord, we pray that your Grace may always precede and follow us, that we may continually be given to good works; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen!