

## **Twenty Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time B/2009**

Human life offers us a variety of things for our enjoyment and benefit. Though some of these things are attractive and even pleasing to us, we cannot, however, have all of them. We have to make a decision and choose wisely what is profitable for us and what is not. To choose wisely means always that we have to opt for some things and give up others. But how can we come to such a wise and profitable choice? A response to such an inquiry requires discernment, good judgment and good decision. All the readings of this Sunday invite us to come to make good decisions that are profitable for our life here now and for our eternal life in heaven.

The first reading describes one of the judicious choices Solomon has made in a very crucial moment of his life as a leader of Israel. At that time, instead of asking God to give him possessions, riches and honor, he prayed for the virtue of prudence and the wisdom to understand the process of governing. He preferred wisdom to scepter and throne; he counted gold and silver as nothing with regard to God's wisdom. But as he preferred wisdom to health and comeliness, everything else was given to him.

This text teaches us that God's wisdom is more beneficial than human knowledge. How many lives have been ruined with regrets and remorse, because people have not been wise enough to make good choice in a crucial moment of their lives? How many people have been physically, mentally and emotionally destroyed for having followed the advice of a bad counselor?

There is for a human being only one valuable and sustainable wisdom, which comes from God. That wisdom consists in the ability to think of things as God thinks of them; to act on things as God acts on them; to see things as God sees them and to understand them as God does. It is that divine thinking, perception, feeling and understanding that the young man from the Gospel did not have.

First of all, we have to admire the seriousness of this young man. For the whole of his life, he was faithful to the law and never had he missed fulfilling its requirements. The problem, however, is that his conception of salvation is exclusively selfish. It is all about him and the fulfillment of the law. Once the law is fulfilled, he feels at peace with himself. He locks up in himself and does not think about people around him, or about what is happening around him.

When Jesus reminds him of the commandments, he seems to have played his game well. But what he ignores is that it is not enough to obey the law; it should also be applied to the particular circumstances of life as we interact with our fellows. That is why Jesus wants him to extend his understanding of the law. In fact, Jesus does not look only at what we are today as we respect the law, but also at what we should be. What we should be as good people, generous, compassionate, open to others is as important as obeying the law.

Another thing is that the basic question of our Christian life is not only about us; it is also about others. It is for that reason that the greatest of the commandments is to love God and to love our neighbor. Here the young man seems to be out of touch. The respect of the law was not enough to win him the respectability of Jesus.

Not to kill, that is fine; not to commit adultery, that is fine too; not to steal, that is also fine. But, how about sharing a little bit of who you are and what you have with others? How about being a little bit more generous with people as you are with yourself? Not doing things is certainly respectable; but being Christian consists, first of all, in doing things. We are all invited to the moral courage of getting out of our selfishness and the concentration on “I” and to create the relationship of “we” with our brothers and sisters.

Unfortunately, the young man was not ready to accept the vision of Jesus. He was not ready to share a little bit of what he was and what he had with others. His material possessions became a serious handicap to his relationship with Jesus and his fellows. This explains the statement of Jesus, “How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!”

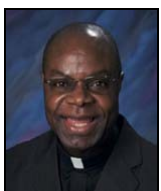
Why is Jesus saying this? First of all, Jesus is not condemning the possession of riches, but the imprisonment of the human heart and mind in it. In fact, material possessions tend to fix our hearts to this world as though it were the only reality we have to care for. So much is at stake and we have so much interest in it that it becomes difficult to think beyond material possession or to be willing to leave it.

Moreover, by making the material possessions our main interest, we tend to think of everything in terms of price and not value. With such a concept in mind, we forget that there are in the world values other than money, that there are things that money cannot buy. The drama of the rich young man lies here.

That is why the reaction of Jesus, to the astonishment of the disciples, is to reassure them that for God nothing is impossible. Plus, no one can give up anything for the sake of God’s kingdom without receiving back a hundredfold. The kingdom of God involves equally suffering and persecution, but at the end of which there is eternal life.

All that brings us once more to the importance of making good decisions in life. Only the opening of our hearts to the word of God can enlighten us and guide us in the difficult choices we face on a daily basis in our lives. God’s word is capable of helping us because it is effective, capable of testing our earthly life, our spiritual existence, and disclose the secrets of our hearts. We cannot live and disregard the wisdom that comes from the word of God. If we do so, we run the risk of making bad decisions and bad choices. Let us pray, then, that the Lord may fill us with his wisdom so that we come to good decisions that can allow us to lead a kind of life that brings us into God’s kingdom. May God give us the courage to change any time we listen to the word of Jesus! God bless you all.

**Wisdoms 7, 7-11; Hebrews 4, 12-13; Mark 10, 17-30**



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