

TWENTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
October 14, 2018 B

Facilitator: *Let us take a minute to consciously acknowledge that we are in the presence of God and ask Him to help us to hear the Word He wants us to hear this week.*

Pause for a moment and then play a religious song.

Opening prayer: *God of Wisdom, pour out your spirit of wisdom upon us as we gather to share your Word. Help us to value you above all things. Open our eyes to see the “one thing” that prevents us from having a closer relationship with you. This we pray through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Response to last week’s Word: *Let us spend a few minutes sharing how the Word we heard God speak to us last week has unfolded in our lives during the week. Did the Word impact your thinking and/or behavior? Did change occur and how was it?*

Facilitator: In the past weeks, Jesus has been giving his followers and prospective followers lessons in discipleship. Today’s Gospel offers us a **sixth lesson**. It concerns the danger of earthly riches and how they can get between us and our relationship with God. Both the first reading and Gospel contrast heavenly and earthly riches and wisdom. The second reading speaks of how God’s Word pierces our hearts, enabling us to distinguish truth from falsehood.

Let us listen to God’s Word to hear what it is He wants to say to us in these readings today. As you hear a Word, you may want to write it down to remember.

Read the assigned Scripture readings, pausing briefly after each one. Consider going over the commentary after each reading if you have not done so prior to your meeting.

FIRST READING: Wisdom 7:7-11

The speaker is depicted as a king who prays for wisdom. Presumably, it is the kind of wisdom that will enable him to be a fair and wise ruler. He proclaims that he prefers Lady Wisdom to all material riches, to health, to beauty, to everything that women and men normally cherish. In comparison to Lady Wisdom, all other riches are of little value. By making Lady Wisdom his first aim, all other earthly riches are also given to him. (In those days, people believed that the good life was rewarded with earthly riches.)

RESPONSORIAL PSALM 90

This Psalm is a collection of petitions from a community in great distress. The phrase “that we may gain wisdom of heart” connects this Psalm to this week’s readings.

SECOND READING: Hebrews 4:12-13

God’s Word is likened to a “sharp, two-edged sword” that can reach into the most secret recesses of our heart, unmasking what is there. This two-edged sword will help us to distinguish truth from falsehood. It can also challenge us and comfort us.

PROCLAMATION GOSPEL: Mark 10:17-30

As we listen to this first reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our minds for the content.

**A participant reads the Gospel,
then all pause to reflect.**

As we listen to this second reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our hearts to what Jesus is saying to us. Be aware of what draws us in and what part of the Gospel might be a challenge to embrace. You may want to write down the Word you hear.

**A participant reads the Gospel again,
then all pause to reflect.**

GOSPEL COMMENTARY: Mark 10:17-30

Let us now read the Gospel commentary privately.

This is *lesson six* on the characteristics of true discipleship. It deals with the dangers of material wealth.

A rich young man is asking Jesus: “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” His concern raises an important theological question: Can one *gain* eternal life on his/her own, or is it a *gift* from God? It seems the young man thinks he can gain eternal life by performing good actions in addition to keeping the commandments. The fact that the young man is a keeper of the commandments shows that he is indeed

a good man. But then Jesus pulls out his “two-edged sword” and penetrates into the heart of the man. With his “lightning rod,” Jesus shows the young man that he is not nearly as devoted to God as he thinks. Jesus invites him to let go of *passing* wealth so that he can acquire *everlasting* wealth. His *attachment* to his material wealth has become an obstacle to a deeper relationship with God. His riches are his real god and security.

The verses which begin with “*how hard it is for a rich man*” would have blown Jesus’ audience away, given that the contemporary belief is that wealth is a sign of God’s favor. Here Jesus is taking the traditional teaching about wealth and standing it on its head. The reference to “*a camel passing through the eye of a needle*” is a hyperbole stressing the great danger of riches and how attachment to them can be a great threat to our salvation. Material wealth is *not* an obstacle to salvation if one knows that he/she cannot buy his/her way to heaven and if one generously shares his/her material riches with the poor. With God, all things are possible. It is even possible, if not likely, that one can look upon wealth as always inferior to his/her relationship with God, and use wealth to bless others.

Verses 28-30 deal with the benefits of *renunciation*. Peter, feeling a little self-righteous, and having left his fishing business, asks: “*What of us? We have left all to follow you.*” Jesus responds that there will be blessings in this life and the next.

This Sunday’s Gospel is a serious warning on how material riches can be a big obstacle to one’s relationship and discipleship with God and others. Riches and our love of them may steal our hearts.

FAITH-SHARING QUESTIONS

1. Turn to the person next to you and share what verse in the Gospel caught your attention. Why?

**Share the next questions in small groups
of 2 or 3 or with the whole group.**

2. The person in the first reading is praying for prudence and wisdom. What is your deepest prayer of petition for yourself? What is your deepest desire?

3. Attachment to material possessions hampered the rich young man’s relationship with God. What one thing might be blocking you from having a closer relationship with Jesus?

4. In the last sentence, Jesus promises his followers “*a hundred times more now ... with persecutions.*” Have you experienced the ‘*hundred times*’ and the ‘*persecutions*’? What has kept you a follower?

6. What is the one thing Jesus is saying to us in this Sunday’s Gospel about how a disciple should speak or act? And what do you need to do or change to be a better disciple?

JOURNALING: *Having listened to the Word of God, let us now take some quiet moments to write down what is coming to us. What are you hearing God say to you? Your response will be what you bring to Eucharist on Sunday, asking Jesus to help you respond as He asks of you. Go wherever the Spirit leads you.*

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

Consider sharing with one other person how you can act on or respond to the message of this Sunday’s Gospel. Suggestions: Perhaps you already know, but if you don’t, look at what percentage of your income is set aside for Church and charity. If you do not presently give a particular percentage, consider doing so. Also, consider looking in your closet and taking to the local thrift store those clothes and shoes you rarely use. Pray for the gift of wisdom.

SHARE PRAYER RESPONSE TO GOD’S WORD

Share a prayer, however brief, on the Gospel you have just heard, discussed and journaled about. For example: *Lord, you know that none of us are going to sell everything, but please do help me to be generous with my blessings when it comes to the poor in the community—OR—Lord, help me to have the courage to accept the persecutions and to witness to you.* In other words, the prayer at this time should flow from the readings. (Consider standing in a circle and hold hands.)

CONCLUDE WITH PRAYERS OF PETITION AND INTERCESSION

Let us now share personal prayers of petition (prayers for self) and intercession (prayers for others).

Pray for detachment from whatever comes between you and a closer relationship with God.

CONCLUDE WITH A SONG©