

28th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Homily: Fr. Shijo George

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***Do we have enough space for Jesus in our life?
Are we finding it hard to accommodate Jesus?***

One day, a poor woman was praying to Jesus: “Jesus, lead us to heaven.” The youngest boy of the poor woman said: “Don’t worry Mummy, we are guaranteed heaven because Jesus said that rich people don’t go to heaven. We are not rich, so, go back to bed.”

Did Jesus say that by being rich, one will never attain Heaven, and being poor is a guarantee for a place in Heaven?

It is our orientation to life that prepares and makes us ready for heaven. Are we oriented to Jesus, or are we not? In today’s Gospel passage, we see the initial happiness of the rich man as he approached and greeted Jesus to ask him a very relevant question: “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” Then, we see that the enthusiasm of the rich man was completely broken when in response to his question, Jesus urged him to sell and leave everything behind, and to follow Jesus in order to attain salvation. The unfortunate fact was that the rich man was possessed by an inclination towards wealth and the acquisition of wealth. Jesus loved his enthusiasm, and in understanding the real problem behind the rich man’s question offered him a spiritual cure from his possessions, and from his strong desire to accumulate wealth. However, he was not happy with Jesus’ response to what it entailed to be invited to follow Jesus; and he went away grieving. The rich man’s orientation was not for God but for wealth.

Church Father, St. Cyprian of Carthage, when commenting on this Gospel passage, said: “His money owns him instead of him owning his money.”

Jesus was not against being wealthy. Wealth is not a curse if we use it for the betterment of humanity, sharing with the needy, and doing good things for the glory of God. And God, being the source and giver of everything, should be the primary and central focus and focal point of our lives. And by saying: “God is good,” Jesus insists that God is the only source of all good and provider of every good thing, including eternal life.

If we are attached to the world and its possessions, we fail to allow space for Jesus and His Living Word in our lives. Attachment to and orientation toward material possessions makes participation in the Reign of God impossible. It is like trying to put the biggest creature through the tiniest opening; the camel through the eye of a needle. It cannot happen unless God frees that person from the enchantment of possessions, to choose a life in God.

The philosopher, Epictetus, observed: “If a person is unhappy, this must be his or her own fault; for God makes all men to be happy.”

Jesus insists that all of us go and sell; a call for a spiritual cure. “Selling” beyond an economic transaction, suggests a different aspect of the term that is to get rid of something, to let go, or abandon something that we have. This may include possessing some inappropriate things in our life. Are we ready to “sell” things like our ego, self-conceit, our sins, inclinations toward the material world and its pleasures, negative feelings, evil traits, and so on?

Let us orientate our life to God and His Eternal Wisdom; His Word, which is living and active.

It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to put confidence in mortals.

(Psalm, 118:8)