

## **The Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time October 10, 2021**

There was a wise man who went from town to town sharing his wisdom with others. One day, he had reached the outskirts of a village and stopped to rest under a tree. At that moment, one of the villagers ran up to him yelling, "Give me the valuable diamond! Give me the costly gem!"

At first, the wise man was puzzled and asked the villager what he meant. The villager told him that an angel had appeared to him telling him that a wise man was coming to town who could give him a diamond that would make him rich forever.

The wise man opened up his bag and pulled out a large stone. "This is probably the gem that the angel was talking about," the wise man said. "I found it on the side of the road. I'd be happy to give it to you."

When the villager saw the stone, he was stunned by its beauty and brilliance. It was a diamond so large that it was as big as a person's face. He figured that it must be the most expensive diamond in the world and that it would make him wealthy beyond his wildest dreams. He took the diamond from the wise man and hurried home, unable to believe his good fortune.

That night the man tossed and turned in his bed, unable to fall asleep. At sunrise, he ran back out to see if the wise man was still there outside the gates of the village. When he saw the wise man, he went up to him and said, "What wealth do you have that made it so easy for you to give that precious diamond away? I want that same freedom for myself."

The man in this story realized something that many wealthy people have often painfully discovered. Riches and wealth can be a burden. They can isolate us from others. Many people have ruined their health and destroyed their families to pursue riches. And in the end, they're forced to ask themselves, "Is this all there is?"

On the other hand, there is real freedom in living a simple life. It affords us more time to spend with family and friends. Living simply makes it possible for us to be more generous with our time and money. Because our money isn't all tied up in complicated investments or expensive hobbies, we have extra to share with others. People who live simply find their joy not in accumulating more treasure but in giving to others in need. They find true freedom in not measuring their self-esteem in dollars and cents but in the joy that they can bring to others.

This is the lesson that the rich young man in today's gospel learns. He is truly a good man. He wants to please God and wants to live a holy life. Though he has kept all

## **The Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time October 10, 2021**

the commandments, his heart tells him that there is something more. And he knows that Jesus is the one who can give it to him. Though he might not realize it, that “something more” his heart longs for is a relationship with Jesus.

Many of us here today can probably relate to this young man. Like him, we live good lives. We try not to hurt anyone and do good when we have the opportunity to. We go to Mass faithfully and say our prayers. But something still seems to be missing. Our hearts tell us that there is “something more.” That “something more” is most likely a relationship with Jesus. He is not just some figure from the past who taught us how to live a good life. Rather, He is God, alive and present among us, risen from the dead, and active in His Church. A relationship with Him is possible for all the baptized. If your heart is aching to know Jesus, then run to Him like the young man in today’s gospel does. Tell Him about your desire to know, love, and serve Him. And be assured that He will look upon you with love and embrace you.

But be aware. Friendship with Jesus will cost us something.

In the case of the young man in today’s gospel, it is his great wealth that prevents him from following Jesus. Jesus’ words are difficult for us to hear. Imagine how much more difficult it was for the rich young man to hear them. St Mark tells us that he went away sad. He couldn’t give up his possessions to follow Jesus. All his wealth had stolen his freedom to pursue the deepest desire of his heart - friendship with Jesus.

If we were that young man running up to Jesus, what would He say to us? What would Jesus see in our hearts that is keeping us from committing ourselves totally and without reservation to Him? Is it our wealth? Is it our standing in the community? Could it be addictions to unhealthy substances and behaviors? What is keeping us from having the freedom to live the gospel with utter abandon? Whatever it is, if we choose that over friendship with Jesus, we will be sad like the rich young man. If, however, we choose a life of faith in Jesus we will know freedom and joy. We will be in touch with the deepest longings of our hearts which are not for material possessions but for friendship with God.

St Mark does not tell us what happened to the rich young man after he left Jesus. But we can bet that he began to look at his possessions differently. Most likely, he began to see them for what they were - burdens which were imprisoning him and preventing him from living the good life he longed for. We can hope that, little by little, they took up less space in his home and in his heart. We can hope that he became more generous with what he had and took less pride in accumulating worldly goods.

## **The Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time October 10, 2021**

The same is true for us. We might not yet have the freedom to give away those things that are tying us down - whether they be material possessions or sinful behaviors. But, little by little, our hearts will tell us that there is something more. We will begin to realize that no worldly good is as precious as the freedom of a simple life given over to the service of God. If we seek God out, it will become clear to us that a life of friendship with Jesus is the greatest wealth any person can have - a wealth that no one can take away from us. And, indeed, it is the only wealth we can take with us when we die.