

# *Reflecting* On Sunday's Readings

## **What must I do to inherit eternal life?**

***Wisdom 7:7-11 Hebrews 4:12-13 Mark 10:17-30***

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In my native country of Burma and in many Asian countries they have a peculiar way of catching monkeys. They cut a small hole in a sturdy box, then they put a tasty nut or a small fruit inside the box. The hole is just large enough for the monkey to put its hand through, but it's too small for the monkey to withdraw its hand once it has clutched the nut or the fruit inside. So now the monkey has two choices. It can either let go of the nut and go free, or it can hold on to the nut, or the fruit and remain trapped. Monkeys usually tend to hold on the nut, or the fruit.

In our gospel reading we heard that a young man ran up to Jesus and kneeling before him, asked him, ***“Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”*** This man had probably heard that Jesus was a good and charitable person. The Love of God that is in Jesus draws this man to Jesus. This man is unnamed by Mark, the evangelist, but can be identified with every man or woman, like you and me, to whom this passage is addressed.

All of us have already received, or will receive one day or another, this calling of grace, this invitation from God to come to him. And we will indeed go to him, for his grace is almighty: We will go to Christ to ask him, with the help of his grace, ***“Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”*** But what will we do afterwards? What will we do when he answers us and answer us he will? Jesus was offering the young man in our gospel his vocation, an invitation to follow him, but he walked away ((Sad) because he had many possessions). The grace of God is certainly almighty, and by that same grace, man remains free! That is one of the many gifts given to us by God, the gift of “Free Will.” Will we use that free will to keep our liberty for ourselves and like the young man walk away from God’s invitation, or instead will we entrust it back to God and follow him?

It can be interesting to sit down and make a list of the things we most value in life. It's not particularly difficult to do that. We can arrange the list of family, faith, friends, work, leisure time, husband or wife, possessions, money, reputation, and I can go on. And we can put them in order of importance. After we've finished we can sit back and feel quite pleased with ourselves. Our values are in order and we're doing quite well in life. Then it's interesting to take the same list and estimate how much time we devote to each of these things each week. It can be surprising to see how much time we spend earning a living and accumulating possessions as opposed to the quality time we spend with our spouse, our children, or with God. Sometimes the time we use to "unwind" after a busy day can surpass the time spent interacting with the ones we love the most.

And Jesus looking upon him loved him, and said to him, ***"You are lacking in one thing. Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me."***

We can all picture ourselves kneeling before Jesus and hearing his voice, ***"You are lacking in one thing."*** What is it? What is that one thing that you are lacking? Is it our inability to let go of our many material possessions, or our anger, grudges, alcohol, drugs, lust, apathy. Or perhaps the commandments, indeed, have been forgotten and a lie or series of lies need to be faced, perhaps unfaithfulness, being unkind and unloving, maybe a theft, or a fraud needs to be faced and addressed.

This week we can consider what is important to us and determine whether or not we devote as much time to those areas as we should. We can take a look at the things that hold us back from listening to and following God's call in our lives. We can divest ourselves of whatever it is that holds us back. When we become "poor" we can easily acknowledge our need for God. That's the truth Jesus tries

to communicate to the young man and to you and I, in today's Gospel. We too have a chance to learn that very same lesson.

And so in a few moments as we approach this table raising our voices in our communal hymn of praise and thanksgiving, let us pause for a moment and ask our Lord to give us the grace to fully give ourselves to Jesus, to follow Him, the Son of God himself and also to give us a greater reverence for the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ! And as always let us ask him to guide our thoughts, our feelings and our actions.

We seem to always have that one thing in our life that serves as an obstacle to holiness—to purity. The obstacles may seem overwhelming; yet we learn today that anything is possible with God if we let go and trust in him. So, what are we hanging on to? Like the monkey in my earlier story, as long as we are hanging on to the nut or to the fruit, we cannot go free and we will continue to remain trapped and we will continue to ask over and over again, ***“Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”***

***The Lord is on watch. He is always near. The Lord is my Shepherd. I walk with no fear. May God Bless each and every one of you.***

