

TWENTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY OT-B

"Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come and follow me."

This is a perfect example of the Word of God acting like a two-edged sword, cutting away to the inmost thoughts of the heart.

But notice that we are told that Jesus looks at the man in the Gospel, loves him, and then challenges him.

All of the difficult teachings of Jesus are ultimately given out of love.

As Jesus says in the Gospel according to John: "I have come that you might have life and have it to the full."

To recognize the way that leads to the fullness of life we need the prudence and wisdom prayed for in the first reading.

Each of us comes here each week in the spirit of the man in the Gospel who wants to know what he must do to inherit eternal life.

With the Psalmist each of us prays: "Teach us to number our days aright that we may gain wisdom of heart."

In other words, life on earth is short; how can we use our resources and the time we are given to make the best investment in eternity?

In the case of the man in the Gospel, he walks away from Jesus sad, for he had many possessions.

Jesus, for his part, must have been saddened as well ... recall how he had looked at this man with love.

Jesus wanted him to become his disciple.

And so Jesus declares, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the Kingdom of God!"

The root of this difficulty can be found in one interpretation of the strange image Jesus uses.

He speaks about a camel passing through the eye of a needle.

Some Scripture scholars suggest that "the eye of the needle" was a particularly narrow gate in the wall surrounding Jerusalem.

Now imagine if you approached that narrow gate with a camel laden down with many things.

There would be no way you could enter the city through that gate unless you first unloaded your camel.

The same is true of entrance into the Kingdom of God.

If we are loaded down with stuff, the desire for more stuff, the fear of losing any of our stuff, and the need to protect all of the stuff we have, we are going to be left standing outside that narrow gate.

The condition I have described can be summed up by saying that a person is possessed by his possessions.

This is what Jesus is warning us against.

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In the Gospel according to Matthew Jesus tells us: "Where your treasure is there will be your heart."

Jesus loves us and wants us to experience the fullness of life.

Keeping wealth and possessions in perspective helps us to experience the joy he promises.

Sharing what we have with those who are in need reminds us that we are stewards of the resources we have accumulated.

Everything is God's gift.

As God has been gracious toward us so we are called to be generous to others.

Jesus promises a hundredfold to those who make sacrifices in his name and for the sake of the Gospel.

We may suffer persecution or ridicule, but we will also have the support of the Christian community in this life and the company of all the holy ones in eternal life.