

28 Sunday B

October 10, 2021

St. Patrick's

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**“Good Teacher, what must I *do* to inherit eternal life?”**

It's something, I suggest, that we all want—eternal life. We're hoping for a full life now. More than that, after I take my final breath, I'm hoping for more, you are too...yes, eternal life.

So, this is a crucial Gospel story for us, and the question hangs there on this Sunday: *What must we do to inherit eternal life?*

Now, Friends, there are a lot of folks with whom Jesus came into contact in St. Mark's Gospel. Of all the people spoken of in this Gospel, this is the *only* person whom the Gospel specifically says that **“Jesus loved him.”** That's amazing.

Now, this guy is a doer. He must be a Type A personality. He gets things done. Moreover, in this Gospel story, it specifically says that he **“had many possessions.”** He was a large landowner. Yes, this guy is a doer, and it comes through in how he words his question, **“What must I *do* to inherit eternal life?”**

Jesus answers him concisely, **“You know the commandments.”** That's what he tells the guy.

Now, St. Patrick's, we know the Ten Commandments, too. And Jesus lists them: **“Honor your father and mother. You shall not murder. You shall not steal.”** And so on. But did you notice that Jesus slipped in another commandment that's not in the Ten Commandments: **“You shall not defraud”?**

Jesus tucked that one among the others. I bet you didn't spot it. With his **“Do not defraud,”** that two-edged sword of Jesus' word sliced the soul of that wealthy man, and he didn't even know he was bleeding.

Let me point it out again. He was the only person in all of this Gospel that specifically said **“Jesus loved him.”** But more: Of all the people spoken of in St. Mark's Gospel, this guy is the *only* person who walked away from Jesus. The Gospel puts it matter-of-factly: **“And he went away sad, for he had many possessions.”**

If he had a lot of possessions, it means that he was holding onto what was due others. He had defrauded them. Jesus added the commandment to point that out—to him, and to us.

Indeed, God's Word is a **"two-edged sword."** Jesus went after the rich man's Achilles' heel that kept him from fully following Jesus. Am I honest enough to name my Achilles' heel, that keeps me from fully following Jesus? Are you?

Finally, notice what Jesus says later to his disciples: **"Children: how hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God."** They're adults, grown-ups, these followers of Jesus, and here he calls them **"children."** Why? It goes back to the Gospel story we heard last Sunday, just before today's Gospel reading from Mark. The disciples had been trying to shoo away some small kids. **"Let the children come to me...for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these...Whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it."**

**"Good Teacher, what must I *do* to inherit eternal life?"** That guy in the Gospel was a "doer." An inheritance...of eternal life. Small kids don't *do* anything for an inheritance: they simply receive it, as a gift.

St. Patrick's: Eternal life is a gift. We can't *do* anything to earn it, to buy it. Children simply receive the gift, and enjoy it. We're called to embrace the gift of eternal life like a small child. I can't do that, though, if I'm tightly holding onto my stuff like the rich guy in the Gospel. His hands were too full. He couldn't take hold of Jesus' gift. Let's free up our hands...and our heart.

*General Intercessions*

*October 10, 2021*

*28<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time*

**Teach us, as disciples of Jesus, to live simply and to give freely to the poor; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**On this 58<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of Vatican Council II, inspire your Church to embody Pope John XXIII's model of inclusivity, peace, and service; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**Especially during this “Respect Life” month, free us from the violence within our city—in our schools, in everyday life, and in our homes. Make us truly instruments of your peace; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**Help us heal from the pandemic; and, inspire all of us to show care in safeguarding others from the Delta variant; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**Unite people of every faith and nation in efforts to purify water, reclaim a clean environment, and secure healthy food for all people; we pray to you, O Lord—**

(for the 11:00 a.m. Mass only--)

**Deepen the gifts of the Holy Spirit within our catechists, that they might bring forth the presence of our Good Shepherd within our young people, and all of us; we pray to you, O Lord—**

