

28th Sunday in Ordinary Time - Mark 10:17-30

A wealthy older gentleman had just recently married a lovely young lady, and was beginning to wonder whether she might have married him for his money. So, he asked her, "Tell me the truth: if I lost all my money, would you still love me?" She said reassuringly, "Oh honey, don't be silly. Of course I would still love you. And I'd miss you terribly."

So how are you today? Are you happy? Do you look at your life and feel it is good? Don't look at me as if I don't have the right to ask you that question.

In fact, that question is in a real sense the most important question. In the end it is not how much money we have, how many people like us on Facebook, how much work we have finished; but rather how happy we are that matters.

Although it might **not** seem so at first, this question is a profoundly religious question. Because, as all people of faith know, our ability to be happy, our ability to live life deeply is directly connected to our relationship with God.

If we seek life and happiness, we **cannot** find them apart from the One who is the source of all life and happiness. We cannot answer this ultimate question apart from God.

So how do we connect with God? How can we find that joy? It is at the same time both easier and more difficult than we imagine. On one hand connecting with God is simple and accessible, on the other hand it is challenging and elusive.

Rabbi Abraham Heschel, one of the great religious thinkers of the last century, has said that only three things are necessary for us to connect with God: God's willingness to love us, the capacity of the human soul to receive that love, and a moment in which those two realities can meet.

Moreover, he insists that there is not a time in our lives when any one of those three things is missing. God is always loving us, we are always capable of receiving that love, and there is always a moment in which we and God can connect.

Therefore, in this sense, finding joy and connecting with God is easy. It is simple, immediately accessible, like breathing in and breathing out, as present to us as our own consciousness.

Yet at the same time connecting with God is challenging and elusive. That is what today's gospel is about. For in this gospel, Jesus and a man who runs up to him try to connect.

All three things that are necessary are there. Jesus is willing. He loves the man and offers to him joy and discipleship. The man is open. He has kept the commandments his entire life. He seeks Jesus out and asks for His direction and advice. The moment is there, when Jesus and the man meet, where joy is offered and deeply desired. And yet—nothing happens.

The man walks away grieving. How is this possible? How is it possible to have life and joy so freely offered and so deeply desired and yet have nothing happen?

The simple answer is: **something else got in the way**. The gospel says that the man left because he had many possessions. We do not know what those possessions were, but whatever they were, the man put them before what Jesus was offering. Whatever they were, they distracted him from the life and the joy that Jesus was offering and that he so deeply desired. That is the tragedy of today's gospel. It is a tragedy in which you and I can share.

Look at this day. Could it be more beautiful? The trees are changing color. The air is cool. Beauty surrounds us.

Yet we can be so involved in our work, in our responsibilities, in our problems, in our aches and pains, that we miss the beauty that surrounds us.

In missing that beauty, we miss the joy that it can give us and the God who offers it to us. Think of the people in your life who love you, who belong to you, who give you joy. Could you imagine greater blessings?

Yet we can become so preoccupied by all we need to do before we go to bed tonight, by the things which make us angry, by the way we want our lives to be different, that we miss the love that surrounds us.

In missing that love, we miss the joy that it can give us and the God who offers it to us. Look at the real opportunities that are present to you in your life right now: the opportunity to grow, the opportunity to understand, to serve, to laugh, to enjoy what you have been given.

Yet we can be so deadened by the routine of living, by doing the next thing, by responding only to the next impulse, that all of those opportunities pass us by. When they pass us by, we have lost the joy they can bring and the God who offers them to us.

So how are you today? Are you happy? If you are not, that could change. In this very moment, God is offering you what you desire.

In this moment, there is love and joy and beauty. Take it! Do not turn and walk away. Do not place anything between yourself and what God is offering. Accept what God is giving you, and know that “all things are possible for God.” AMEN.