

A holy man—reached the outskirts of a village. Weary and aching he sat down to rest under a tree. A villager came running up to him and demanded, “Give me the stone, the precious stone!” “Who are you, my friend?” asked the sage. “What stone do you seek?” “Last night, God appeared to me in a dream, he told me that an ascetic would meet me on the outskirts of my village, and that he would give a precious stone just for the asking and I would be the wealthiest man in the world!” It has happened just as the Lord said it would! Here you are. Please give me the stone! The holy man picked up a stone from his bag and said, “You can have it with my blessings.” The villager gazed at the stone in wonder. It was a diamond. The largest one in the land. He took the diamond and went home, saying to himself, “I am the wealthiest and happiest man in the world!”

Next morning, he was back before the holy man, and he seemed none the happier for his new-found wealth. What brings you here this morning asked the holy man. “My lord” said the villager I could not sleep a wink last night, I tossed and turned, and I had no peace. I have come to return the diamond to you. *Give me your wealth in its place.* My wealth? Said the holy man laughing. Why, I have none to speak of! “Oh yes you do, give me that wealth which made you give away the diamond so easily!” *What is our wealth?*

How does one calculate one’s wealth? Usually, we calculate it by checking how much we have, but the saints tell us we should calculate it by checking how much we have given away. A wise old man, on his deathbed, uttered the following statement.

- *What I spent, I had.*
- *What I kept, I lost!*
- *What I gave I have.*

“Money can make us. Money can break us.... Our daily life in the modern world revolves around money. We work to earn money. We spend restless nights calculating how we can increase it. And we go through anxious moments as we plan how best to spend it. Word of God of this Sunday –invites us to examine our attitude towards money and wealth. In the first reading, King Solomon, who is acclaimed as the author of the book of Wisdom, sings: *I prayed, and understanding was given me; I entreated, and the spirit of Wisdom came to me. I esteemed her (Wisdom) more than scepters and thrones; Compared with her, I held riches as nothing (Wis7:7-8).*

In the Gospel today, Jesus warns us: “How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God” (Mk 10:24)! This statement shocks us just as it ‘astonished’ the disciples of Jesus (v.26). This discourse of Jesus on wealth is prompted by the encounter between Jesus and the man who wanted to inherit eternal life. The man was not able to respond to the invitation of Jesus because he was possessed by his possessions. So, what is the Word of God this morning inviting us to? What was the attitude of Jesus to money and wealth? And what could the teaching of Jesus mean to us – we who live in a more complex society, governed by a more intricate economic system, compared to that of Jesus’ time.

- And finally in today's gospel text, he says, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God" (Mk 10:24)! Now what does all this mean for us – Wealth like all others gifts, is God's gift to us. We use it to glorify his name.

1. Accept the primacy of God and his Kingdom: The repeated message of Jesus is very clear – seek first the kingdom of God (Lk 12:31)! What is it that occupies the core of our hearts? Is it our wealth and possessions? Is it our fame and achievements? Is it our human securities? Jesus simply challenges these craving and invites us to give God the prime place. Why? Because money can buy us a cozy bed but not sound sleep. Money can buy us a variety of food, but not the peaceful ambient to enjoy our meal. Money can buy us a house, but not a home of loving people. Money can buy us books, but not the gift of wisdom.

2. Use things and love people: We live in a use-and-throw society. We use ball-point pens, and we throw them; We pull out facial tissues and we use and throw. And... we use people, and we throw them. Instead of using things we love them: 'I love my car; I love my dog; I love my clothes!' On the other hand, we tend to use people: someone is important to me as long as they are useful to me: we abort unwanted pregnancies, we have no time for our elderly parents, and we debate about 'assisted suicides'! The Word of God invites us to prioritize. *Yes, to use things and love people.*

3. Be free not to be possessed by your possessions: If our identity as human persons are locked into our possessions, then when we lose our possessions what will become of our identity. On the other hand, our identity comes from the fact that we are created in the image of God – that the Kingdom of God is within us. The unnamed man in the Gospel of today was not able to respond to his heart's deepest desire, because of his shallow desire for his possessions. And he remains unnamed, without an identity! On the other hand, the disciples who 'left everything and followed Jesus,' – we know their names today. Their identity comes from their relationship with Jesus. Indeed, they were given a hundredfold! So then, let us pray in this Eucharist that we accept of the primacy of God and his kingdom in our lives, so that we only *use* things, but *love* people. And in this way, we will be free not to be possessed by our possessions.

God Bless You.