

Twenty-Eighth Sunday of Ordinary Time - B (2021)

Wisdom 7:7-11

Hebrews 4:12-17

Mark 10:17-27

“How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God.”

That sentence, taken from the Gospel just read, can seem rather harsh – and almost threatening – for a Thanksgiving weekend. For we have, all of us, so much more than most people on this earth. We are, all of us, *“those who have wealth.”* Yet, our Lord is not saying, I think, that the kingdom of God is beyond our reach. He is saying rather that we have to learn better how to appreciate our world around us – if we hope to reach that goal. An incident described in a little book, published a good number of years ago now, may help explain that point.

The book is called, *“The Little Prince”*. On one level, it is a book meant for children; but, on another level, it has a profound message for those of us who have not been children for a very long time. It tells the story of a man whose plane has crashed in the desert . He is trying to make his way back to civilization; and, as he does this, he meets a young boy who has recently landed from another planet. He is ‘the little prince’; and, in the book, the boy describes this mysterious new world that he is encountering for the first time.

At one point, looking at all the busyness around him, he says, *“These people rush about a lot, but they do not seem to know what they are looking for – or they never seem to find it – because they never stop rushing.”* One day, he sees a large garden, and he says, *“These people grow thousands of roses in their garden, but they*

must not find what they are looking for, because they just keep growing more roses.”
And he concludes sadly, *“They forget that what they are looking for can be found in a single rose.”*

That little book may have been written seventy-five years ago, and our Lord’s warning may have been uttered two thousand years ago. But they are both speaking directly to us – today. For they are both talking about having enough – and more than enough – and not being grateful. Our whole culture is built on the need to grow more and more roses. It deliberately blurs the line between “greed” with “need”.

We may have to buy into that mind-set to some degree, because our whole economy is built upon it. But this Gospel is asking that we pause and think for a moment; it is asking that we be careful. This culturally created drive for more can take our focus from those people, those realities, those truths who should count most in our lives. Learning to see and value really counts in life – a good relationship, helping another, watching a sunset, hugging a baby. That is the single rose. That is our Lord’s point in this Gospel, and that is what Thanksgiving is about too.

Anyone who has ever cleared out the room of a nursing home, after the death of someone close who has died, knows precisely the message of this Gospel. No matter what that person has achieved or made in this world, when it comes time to clear the room, you are usually left with an armchair, a television set and a couple of boxes. It can be a difficult way to learn to value what really should count in life.

I am reminded of the words of the writer who said, *“I went beyond the part of*

the city where the streets were lit by bright lamps, and I came to an open, dark area. And it was only then," he said, "that I discovered that the sky was full of stars. I thought to myself, 'How easily earthly lights can extinguish the heavenly ones.'"

“That is the message of the single rose. That is the message of Thanksgiving. That is what our Lord asks that we remember, when he says ...

“How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God.”