

Scripture Reading

A Reading from the Gospel according to Mark (*Mark 10:17- 21*)

As Jesus started on His way, a man ran up to Him and fell on his knees before Him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "Why do you call Me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good - except God alone. You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother.'" "Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy." Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," He said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow Me." The Gospel of the Lord. R. Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection ~ Jesus asks us to free ourselves of all bondages

Seek first the kingdom of God and all these things will be given to you (Matthew 6:33). The rich young man who came up and asked Jesus what he needed to do in order to attain eternal life, appeared in the eyes of others to have everything. However, the young man knew this was not true. He knew he lacked something vital. This so troubled him, he came up to Jesus to inquire what else he must do in order to inherit eternal life. It seemed he had followed faithfully the commandments. Or did he really? The answer was given to him in his encounter with Jesus Who revealed to him that he did not place God first in his life. This was the reason that despite his immense wealth, his heart was not at rest but remained empty and searching. Earthly treasures can easily bind and enslave a person's heart but can never satisfy its innermost craving which the Creator has reserved for Himself (cf. Colossians 1:16).

The only way to inherit eternal life: Love God above all else, then love others as much as you love yourself. Loving God above all else consists of doing His will joyfully and that includes obeying all His commandments, teachings and precepts, most of which tell us what things to avoid and not to do. It also includes the loyalty to give God and His Kingdom first priority in our lives. How to do this will depend upon each individual life. Not everyone is called to give up one's earthly wealth unless it has become a bondage which acts against one's holiness. For the young man in question, it is clear that to be a true follower of Christ, he needed to love God more than his immense wealth. Wealth is not a sin but loving it more than God is a sin.

Anything that is more important to us than God becomes for us a false idol, a bondage in the eyes of God. It goes against the first commandment. In our eyes, we may seem to be good followers of Christ like the young man in adhering to the commandments of the Lord, but when we have a consuming passion or attachment to a person, a thing, an activity, a hobby, a habit, even ourselves e.g. our opinion, our self-righteousness, our reputation, pride, etc. that bears no reference to our eternal salvation or that of others, it becomes for us a false idol, a bondage against our spiritual life. This bondage or false idol will be the thing that will sap our precious time and energy that should be channeled towards the seeking of the Kingdom of God (cf. Matthew 6:33) and the growth of our personal holiness (cf. Matthew 5:48). Without the help of God's grace, it may be something which we find very difficult to extricate ourselves from. Only when we are freed of all bondages can we place God first in our life. Real freedom is the freedom to put God first in our life. All other blessings will follow (cf. Matthew 6:33). *So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed (John 8:36).*

The human heart is made to seek true love (cf. Colossian 1:16). We do not have to be fabulously rich to understand the truth that wealth does not satisfy the heart in its deepest longing, nor can any created thing in this world, nor any person or creature on this earth. God made the human heart to share His love. To receive His love and make a return of that love. The human heart can only rest from its yearning and longing when it rests in the love of God, when it succeeds in making itself the throne of God. When other false gods are sitting enthroned on it, it is restless and continues its search for the True One.

Conversation with Jesus: Precious Lord, soften all the hardness in my heart. Fill my heart with Your love and strength. Open my mind and heart to understand the truth and depth of Your love for me - a love that truly satisfies the deepest longing of my heart and which calls me to live a full blessed life, a fullness that only You can give. Let me never be satisfied with mediocrity in my spiritual life. Fill me with zeal and passion for Your glorious Kingdom, the wonder of which is beyond human imagination (1 Corinthians 2:9). Shine Your light of truth into my heart and illuminate all the bondages that have a hold over me. Free me from all bondages and attachment to myself, any person or thing. Give me the honesty, strength and courage to work upon them so that there will be no more false gods in my life but only You enthroned in my soul. Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus. www.twohearts.hk