

Greetings to you!

The theme for our morning's meditation is "The spiritual danger of trusting in wealth". While scripture doesn't condemn a wealthy person it does warn us of the danger of depending on it for everything. Wealth can blind our eyes to the reality of God and may make us think that we are self-sufficient without the need for God in our lives. When life becomes comfortable and we have adequate resources then our tendency to depend on God begins to diminish. This morning's readings warn us about the spiritual danger of trusting in wealth.

In the Old Testament reading taken from the book of Deuteronomy the people of Israel are cautioned as they were about to enter into the promised land. He reminds them that this was the land with brooks, streams and deep springs gushing out into the valleys and hills; a land with wheat and barley, vines, fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil and honey. The Lord reminds them that after receiving all these good things and being satisfied they should not become proud and arrogant and forget the Lord. The people of Israel were led throughout the wilderness and provided for by God. However, when there is plenty there is always a danger of forgetting God. Wealth and prosperity in many ways makes us spiritually complacent.

In the gospel reading from Mark we see a rich young man coming to Jesus and asking him the question as to what he should do to inherit eternal life. Jesus then reminds him of the commandments: "You shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother." Jesus cites several commandments out of the Ten Commandments and also from Deuteronomy. The man replied that he had kept all these laws since he was a boy. Jesus looked at him and loved him. He told him that he lacked one thing and said, "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me". At this the man's face fell. He went away sad because he had great wealth.

Jesus then told the disciples that it was very difficult for the rich to enter into God's kingdom. He said, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter into the kingdom of God." What did Jesus mean by saying that it was easier for the camel to go through the eye of the needle than for someone who is rich to enter into the kingdom of God? Jesus was saying that anybody who depended on wealth as a source of security had no hope of getting into God's kingdom because wealth had become their God. Jesus uses this humorous metaphor to speak about the hindrance to our salvation that wealth brings about. He uses two contrasting opposites to show the impossibility of the rich to enter God's kingdom without God's help. The camel is an extremely large animal and the eye of the needle is the slender gap just enough for a thread to go through. The rich have their wealth to fall back on but the poor have nothing. A camel going through the eye of the needle is a picture of impossibility. Jesus says that the rich cannot gain eternal life by their wealth or by their own effort. Riches cannot buy eternal life. It is only by the grace of God and by faith like a little child that we receive eternal life.

Jesus teaches us by this that it is impossible for any human being to receive eternal life by their wealth or by their merit. Salvation is impossible with human beings but possible only with God. It is a work of God not the achievement of people. The challenge for us as Christians is to take God's warning seriously. Wealth can blind us spiritually and we may not see the need for God in our lives because of our wealth. Wealth can become a stumbling block to our faith and therefore we are called to be wise stewards of what God has given us. May God help us to be good stewards of all the resources he has given to us and be spiritually sensitive towards his leading.