



BENEDICTINE SISTERS OF CHICAGO

Reflections for the 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time
October 13, 2024
Sister Susan Quaintance

Wis 7: 7-11
Ps 90: 12-13, 14-15, 16-17
Heb 4: 12-13
Mk 10: 17-30

I've said it before, and I'll say it again: the gospel is hard. Our encounter with Mark's Jesus this Sunday is no exception.

Before I get to what I think is really hard about today's gospel, there are a few things I want to point out – some encouraging and some, not so much.

- We know that Mark's gospel was written first, somewhere between thirty and forty years after Jesus's death. Given how congruent it is with so much of what Jesus says and how both Matthew and Luke include it in their gospels (albeit with some interesting changes), scholars agree that we can be relatively sure that Jesus said something close to what we just heard.
- The things that make Mark's version different from Matthew's and Luke's are striking.
 - It's only Mark's Jesus who looks on the young man and "loved him."
 - It's only Mark's Jesus who repeats the observation about how hard it is for the rich to enter the Kingdom of God – but the 2nd time without the mention of wealth. He repeats himself this way: "Children, how hard it is to enter the Kingdom of God."
 - When Matthew and Luke list how the disciples will be rewarded for their sacrifices of home and family and success, Jesus mentions how they will judge the twelve tribes of Israel from thrones next to Jesus. No thrones in Mark.

But, in Mark, there is the promise of persecution. It's weirdly tucked in the midst of what seems like much better rewards. "Amen, I say to you, there is no one who has given up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children and lands for my sake and for the sake of my gospel who will not receive a hundred times more now in this present age: houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions (!), and eternal life in the age to come."

I don't know about you, but I wonder if, when I entered, I thought I was doing the one, big, "give-up" then. No family of my own; no house like I'd grown up in; no big, important job. (Not that there was any guarantee of any of those things if I hadn't entered!) But that's not how it works, is it? All along, Jesus has been asking for one more thing. Monetary wealth, yes – but each of us has different riches. And those are what we're asked for. Maybe it's an ability or a relationship or security or an identity that we thought was God-given and forever. Well, it was God-given but perhaps only ours to steward. Maybe it's this house or our vision of how community would always be. Ultimately, of course, we are asked for the most precious gift we have been given: our lives.

What I find consoling in the face of this demand is that Jesus knows these are big asks. The Collegeville Bible Commentary says that in this gospel "Mark's Jesus challenges [the young man] beyond his

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capacity.” Sometimes that’s true for us, too. But he looks at us with love. He reminds us that even when our hearts are pure and our intentions are whole-hearted (which mind so rarely are), it will be impossible. But, with God, it is possible. The only thing we can rely on is God. “All things are possible with God.”

Amen. Let it be so.