



My Beloved Ones,

This Sunday's Gospel concerns something all those who live and work in the world are aware of: wealth and money.

A wealthy young ruler approaches Christ. The young man is respectful. St. Matthew tells us that he "...came up to Jesus, kneeling and saying, 'Good Teacher, what good deed must I do, to have eternal life?'" (Matthew 19:16) Clearly, this young man is genuinely interested in Christ's ministry, and so, Christ engages him in a dialogue.

He reminds the young man that God alone is good, and encourages him in the commandments that deal with human relationships: "You shall not kill, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother, and You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 19:18-19)

It is here though that we see the young man's pride. "All these I have observed; what do I still lack?" (Matthew 19:20) he says, wishing to emphasize his own importance.

Christ knows this young man's heart: unlike so many, this ruler is not malicious or tempting, but his wealth has fed his ego. And so Christ answers honestly and simply, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me" (Matthew 19:21). The young man does not become angry, he does not attempt to argue, he simply leaves, greatly saddened at the prospect of losing his many possessions.

You see the young ruler knows that Christ is not condemning wealth; many important figures and Patriarchs of the Old Testament were blessed with wealth, by having found favor with God, and living steadfastly and righteously. This young man may too have gained his wealth through righteous living. However, unlike Jacob or Job, this young ruler allowed his wealth to distort his sense of self and his understanding of reality. The young ruler understands that Christ means to humble his love of money, his greed.

When Christ tells the disciples that "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" (Matthew 19:23), He speaks knowing the true purpose of money: for our needs, and for the benefit of others; not to become obsessed by avarice, with defrauding others, or spending excessively.

We need not be like the young man or the disciples, shocked and sad. Instead we should do as Christ explains; putting our trust in God that we might live in moderation, using what gifts He gives us for the betterment of ourselves and our neighbors, all to the glory of His Holy Name.

+ALEXIOS

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