

At that statement his face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions.

This was a good man. The gospel tells us he had been living a good life. A just life, one that was in concert with this faith. And better still the young man was sincerely searching to do God's will.

Jesus knew the man...he knew his heart and he "looked at him and loved him". (Pause). We see the intense human emotion of Jesus often: he gets exasperated with his disciples, rebukes the unclean spirits, is impatient with the Pharisee and is disappointed by his own townsfolk. But here we see the intense emotion of love.

He sees the young man's goodness, and his desire to grow nearer to his God. So he challenges him to remove the obstacles, that get in the way.

Have you ever felt that the challenges of being an authentic disciple are just too hard? We have been looking at the obstacles through the eyes of the disciples over the last few weeks. The obstacle of Ambition, "Who is the greatest?" The obstacle of status, "The one is casting out demons in your name" and he is not even one of us. The great obstacle of all, The Cross! "Unless you take up your cross you cannot be my disciple". And this week the obstacle of possessions and how they distract us.

Actually if you cut out the hard teachings, you will have to cut out about half of the bible. That is why the Lord said, 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.

Love your enemies; pray for your persecutors. When a person strikes you on the right cheek, turn and offer him the other. In giving alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. Do not lay up for yourselves an earthly treasure. Store up treasure in heaven. Forgive without limit. Judge not, lest you be judged. Become as little children. Love one another as I have loved you. Repent and believe the good news. And Sell what you have and give to the poor.

Wow this is hard!

In his search Jesus invited the Rich young man to remove the one obstacle to his continued growth. Jesus knew the one obstacle that stood between the rich young man and God was an excessive attachment to material wealth and goods. And so Jesus invites him let go and let God.

I always stop and ponder at His command. Is Jesus asking too much? The scriptures assure us that we are never challenged beyond our strength. (or so we say)

There is a uniquely Marcan detail in today's Gospel that begs our attention. Mark tells his readers that when the man came to Jesus with his question, **Jesus looked at him and loved him** (v. 19). With Jesus, discipleship is always a partnership. He is indeed Lord and God, and he is also our Brother, Friend, Teacher and Yokemate who looks at each of us with a love that strengthens and supports us.

We have to remember the young man is good; he is willing and generous...to a point. However, he fails because of fear. He cannot let go of his personal comforts and possessions and rely on Jesus for his strength and power.

Remembering that St. John Paul often told to us to be not afraid, quoting that "be not afraid" is found 265 times in the scriptures once for each day. But here is a couple other "bean counter moments". Prayer is mentioned 313 times, be not afraid 365 times, Faith 528 times and caring for the poor 2133 times. You can see not only did Jesus want to remove the obstacle of wealth and possessions...but the heart of God is for the poor!

The encounter with Jesus and the Rich Young Man begins with promise, hope and enthusiasm and ends in sadness, because of his fear. It is particularly sad because the young man had so much promise

Is this your story? Possessions? Great Promise? Fear? Sadness?

Are you caught between the desire to live for the Lord and other attractions? Why do you lack the courage to trust God? Fear not little flock!

Remember Jesus looked upon the young man with Love as he looks upon you with Love. As Mary said, in John's Gospel at the wedding in Cana: **"Do what he tells you."**