

**28<sup>th</sup> Sunday Year B: Wisdom 7:7-11; Ps 89:12-17; Heb 4:12-13; MK 10:17-30**

**Introduction:** Jesus promises a hundred fold reward even in this life to all who leave everything and follow him. All Christians are called to practice detachment.

**Homily:** In the Gospel of today, Mark paints a vivid picture of a rich man meeting Jesus on the road to Jerusalem. The aristocrat was eager, impetuous and effusive. The prophet from Nazareth was patient, practical, and calm as he meets the seekers enthusiasm with the challenge of the kingdom. When the rich man threw himself at the feet of Jesus and called him "good man", Jesus declined such flattery and tells his suppliant that God alone is good. When rich man asked what he could do to enter eternal life, Jesus gave him the standard rabbinical answer: keep the commandments. The rich said he had tried to do this all his life. Then Jesus looked at him and loved him. He then threw out the challenge. Jesus said: go sell everything you have and give all the proceeds to the poor, and then come follow me. This cost of discipleship was too much and too heavy for this prospective disciple. He must renounce his security and prestige. The treasure in heaven will then be his new security. I am not sure he was in hurry to do that. His face fell at this. He said nothing. He turns and goes away, sad and disappointed.

This sorrowful departure of the would-be-disciple of Jesus is one of the most touching scenes in the Bible. The rich man was too attached to what he has to become a disciple of Jesus. Jesus tells his audience how hard it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. The traditional Jewish belief was the wealth was a sign of God's favour. Jesus insists on his own teaching. He says, it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. That vivid picture of the impossible increases the disciples astonishment. The question now is: who can be saved then?

The story of Jesus' encounter with his rich man and Jesus' teaching on wealth are issued as a challenge to us today. We live in a society that seems to measure success in terms of economic growth and security, a society which rewards the rich with more riches. Nothing succeeds like excess. The Jamaican reggae music icon/maestro Eric Donaldson in one of his album title "this is the land of my birth" says 'the progress you make my friend is not always about how rich you are'. The danger today is that our own values can center on power, profit and property. If we are truly what we profess, our real value and identity should center on God and reveal themselves in the values we vigorously pursue or defend. We can easily slip into becoming devotees of consumerism, powered by insatiable desires. The Gospel asks us to pause and reflect on these matters. If our identity and values are dependent on material possessions, what then happens when those material things are taken away from us? What happens when we die? What happens when we are old? Where is the integration that Erick Erickson talks about in his eight stage development of the human person in the life span development psychology? We can all too easily become possessed by attachments. Attachment to material things can take away our freedom to choose.

Jesus wants us to enjoy inner independence so that who we are is not dependent on what we have. As his disciples we should be identified by our relationship with him and our relationship with our neighbours. Detachment helps us to pay attention to others.

Joe Louis was the world's heavyweight boxing champion from 1937 until he retired in 1949. In his boxing days, precisely in 1946, Louis prepared to defend his title against a skilled fighter called Billy Conn. Louis was warned to watch out for his opponents great speed and his tactic of darting in to attack and then moving quickly out of his opponent's range. In a famous display of courage and confidence, Louis replied, "he can run but he can't hide." This statement is very true of our relationship with God. We definitely cannot hide from him, for he knows everything. He knows where our passion is and how sincere we are about it. What do we use our money/wealth for? What is our passion, our biggest passion and possession today?