



TWENTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

CYCLE B

Wisdom 7:7-11
Hebrews 4:12-13
Mark 10:17-30

GATHERING

(On a cloth-covered table in the gathering place rests a crucifix and a small basket. Small pieces of paper and pens or pencils are kept on reserve for use during the closing prayer. As people arrive, they are invited to place the small possession they have brought with them on the table.)

This week the scriptures ask us to consider what we are willing to let go of in order to follow Jesus. Let us choose wisely, recognizing that our God sees into the intentions of our hearts. Last week we spoke about challenges in our relationships. What effect did this conversation have on how you dealt with your relationships since we last came together? *(Members share briefly.)*

OPENING PRAYER

(The facilitator invites members to silence and awareness of the presence of God.)

Leader:

A Prayer of Wholehearted Commitment

Lord,
You have the biblical reputation
of taking people places
they never wanted to go.
Witness Jonah
delivered by whale to Nineveh
and Habakkuk
flown by angel to Babylon.
Also I have heard
You do not consult,
Abraham is suddenly ordered from Haran
and Moses called out of retirement
for the Egyptian assignment,
Furthermore
Paul says
You take a chiroprapist's delight
in Achilles heels,
spurn eloquence for the stutter,
and reveal yourself
in the thorns of the flesh.
And what was this unpleasantness
with your Son shortly before
his appointment at the Right Hand?
So it is that to You
my most resounding "yes"
is a "maybe"
and it is with one eye on the door
that I say
"Behold, Lord, your servant waiteth!"

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(The community pauses for a few moments of reflection.)

All: "So it is that to You
my most resounding 'yes'
is a 'maybe'

LOVE

and it is with one eye on the door
that I say
'Behold, Lord your servant waiteth!'"

Focus Question

What are the riches you recognize in your life right now?

SCRIPTURE SHARING AND REFLECTION

(The scriptures are proclaimed aloud with a pause between readings.)

Commentary

I'm not rich, yet this gospel story cuts to the quick of my life and my belief in Christ. Most days I don't give this gospel much thought, but the church in its wisdom keeps bringing it back to our attention in the liturgical cycle of readings. Sometimes I can hear myself in the young man's request of the Lord: "Good Teacher, what must I do to share in everlasting life?" If I had the chance to be in the physical presence of Jesus, I would want that question answered. If only Jesus himself would tell me personally. No more thinking, wondering, trying and guessing if any particular deed, course of action or decision were going to gain everlasting life for me!

What does Jesus answer? Keep the commandments. That's okay. I've been good, not perfect, but good. I'm probably ahead of lots of other people. I can respond like the rich young man. The law of God has always been important to me. I've followed the rules, almost all the time.

But then what happens? Jesus *looked at him with love*. Isn't that a wonderful thought? I have a sense in praying sometimes or when singing a song in church, that God is looking at me in love, even as ". . . all lies bare and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must render an account (Hebrews 4:13)." That moment of *the look of love* is very powerful and it is followed by a very powerful statement. It is the "one thing more." "Go and sell what you have and give to the poor. . . come and follow me." The young man's face fell. So does mine. Jesus stops me in my tracks. I, too, have many possessions. I protect them in my home behind locked

doors and with the car alarm. I protect them behind my position and tone of voice, behind a condescending attitude of organization and order; behind friends with the same color skin, background and economic status; behind being right and doing the right thing. And Jesus wants me to give all that away and go with him. Where is he going? I don't know that way, that neighborhood, and who is in charge? Unfamiliar, uncomfortable and maybe dangerous things might come up. I pray for wisdom. I'm not quite ready for all that. Maybe. Maybe next time you come by Good Teacher, maybe next time! I pray for wisdom.

FAITH SHARING AND INTEGRATION

(The community pauses in silence to reflect upon the scriptures and the questions which follow.)

1. In what ways do you identify with the rich young man?
2. How much is Jesus asking you to give away?
3. How has consumerism impacted you? Share specific ways you deal with this impact.
4. What is the value of the possession you brought with you today? How is it an obstacle and/or an aid to following Jesus?
5. Where do you need the gift of wisdom in your life? What difference would it make?

RESPONSE IN ACTION

Suggestions:

1. Consider a possession, an attitude or a compulsion that you are willing to let go of to be closer to Jesus. What would it take to make this change? Do it!
2. Go somewhere *different*, to a cultural event, a restaurant, or a shop in a *different* neighborhood; visit a *different* church.

3. Take fifteen or twenty minutes to journal about your *possessions*, at least two times this week, and see what the Lord reveals to you.
4. Pick an area in an important relationship in your life where you need to let go to do what you sense you are called to do by Jesus.

SENDING FORTH AND CLOSING PRAYER

(The community pauses for some minutes of silence and joins in singing, "Here I Am, Lord". The song may be found on the Internet.)

(Some quiet instrumental music plays in the background while the facilitator distributes the pieces of paper and pens/pencils to the members of the group. The facilitator invites people to consider the things they heard and said during the session. He/she asks people to jot down in a few words what actions they will take this week to respond to this week's scripture. Mention is made that the slips will be placed in the basket and that each will draw out a paper to read for the group. After giving the directions, the facilitator pauses for people to think and write. After collecting the papers in the basket, each one then draws out a slip of paper and reads it to the group. After all have been read aloud, members pray in silence for the person whose paper was read.)

(Finally, the group stands in a circle. Each places his/her hand on the shoulder of the person to the right and prays in silence for this person that he/she draws closer to Jesus. After a few moments, the leader draws the prayer to a close.)

Leader: In Jesus' name, we pray.

All: Amen.

(Each offers a deep bow of respect to the person who prayed for him/her.)