



The Church's prayer for Sunday 10th October

Faithful Lord,
whose steadfast love never ceases
and whose mercies never come to an end:
grant us the grace to trust you
and to receive the gifts of your love,
new every morning,
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Bible Readings and Reflection for Sunday 10th October

A reading from Hebrews 4:12-end

¹² For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. ¹³ Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

¹⁴ Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. ¹⁶ Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

A Gospel reading from Mark 10:17-31

¹⁷ As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

¹⁸ "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone. ¹⁹ You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honour your father and mother.'"

²⁰ "Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy."

²¹ Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

²² At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

²³ Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!"

²⁴ The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."

²⁶ The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, "Who then can be saved?"



²⁷ Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.”

²⁸ Then Peter spoke up, “We have left everything to follow you!”

²⁹ “Truly I tell you,” Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel ³⁰ will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. ³¹ But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”

A reflection from Ruth Bond, Licensed Lay Minister

I was playing “Pirate Race” with my three grandchildren not so long ago. Roll the dice, move down the allotted squares and pick up a faced down card. It might or might not be one of 6 pieces that make up your pirate. Once the pirate is assembled you can then go after the treasure. And the chatter went something like this. From Harry who is 9, and winning says, “I’ll have the most treasure.” Matilda at 7 said, “This game is not about treasure, Harry.” Elsie who is 5, quick as a flash came in with, “...no it’s about making a person.” No treasure seeking unless the pirate is made. At the time this of- the-cuff conversation struck me as being worth adding to my Commonplace book.

The Lord moves in mysterious ways, we know that, and when I read this morning’s gospel from Mark the winning or losing at “Pirate Race” came to mind, and what those little children said in their innocent way. Here was the young man not wanting to give up his treasure, not wanting to give up his pieces. He thought to gain eternal life he had to give away his possessions, lose everything, and he wasn’t prepared to do that. He didn’t realise that the game he had to play in order to have eternal life was not to amass treasure but about making a person, his person – for God.

This young man, he had everything, but to decide to face Jesus and ask him the question of what he must do to attain that everlasting life, well, there must have been something missing. We hear so often when people give their testimony, for instance, that something was missing from their life; and the search isn’t necessarily for eternal life, it is more likely to feel fulfilment, a feeling that there is more to my life than “this”.

Yes, he had every material thing and advantage; he appeared to have it all. And his story is important. We must assume this because it is mentioned in all three gospels. Matthew calls him young, Luke says he is a ruler- and Mark says he had great wealth. Hence the rich young ruler.

So often this character is derided, he is one with a bad reputation, a bit like the prodigal son, or Esau who stole his brother’s birth right. The RYM gets a bad press but is that because he is rich or because he doesn’t want to give up his riches? A rhetorical question which I feel will have an answer later on.



However, he was a ruler, young, gifted, respected and on the face of it he was righteous. It would appear he had achieved all this on his own merit but he lacked the one thing that he couldn't buy, one thing that he couldn't acquire by using his influence, he couldn't get that something extra on his own. He hadn't cottoned on that to the fact that to get up he had to give up.

Back in the day religious leaders of the time saw wealth as a positive sign of God's approval. Tick that box. But he could put a cross in the next one for he "ran to Jesus" we read. Now it was thought to be very infra dig, undignified, for a successful dignitary to run anywhere and much less to kneel, as he did in front of Jesus. A minor ruler kneeling before a carpenter. All this in broad daylight to, unlike Nicodemus who went to Jesus in the dark of night.

He must have been desperate; don't you think? Desperate, because he didn't have the one thing that would make him feel alive. "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" First mistake, and Jesus immediately tells him that "no-one is good – except God alone." Something of a cryptic crossword clue, you might say - Only God is good, Jesus isn't bad, Jesus is good, hence Jesus is God?

With that fundamental put straight, Jesus goes on to remind him of the commandments, well the last six commandments that is – the ones that concern how we act with each other. And did you notice, Jesus slipped in another one too? don't defraud. This young man has kept all the commandments, he had been good, he was successful so he must have thought that might well go a long way to give him what he was wanting. But Jesus didn't applaud all this, rather, he told him, no, he must, "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven" And here's the rub – "Then come, follow me".

We know that young rich ruler decided he didn't want to give everything up and follow. He has decided he wanted eternal life but he was not prepared to pay the price. He wanted the treasure before he'd made the life, before all the pieces fitted together. He refused to follow Jesus; the only person we read of in the Bible who refused. Others had dropped their nets and left their boats People could leave their work, but this man could not leave his wealth.

And yet, before he told the young man to sell everything and follow we read, "Jesus looked at him and loved him". This man was serious in his question, he really did want to know how to achieve eternal life, that special something, and Jesus loved him enough to tell him the truth. This ain't gonna happen, unless you replace your gold with God. Yes, he'd done well in life, yes, he'd been good to other people, but what of the first commandment, had he kept that one? "You shall have no other gods before me." And that is the heart of the matter, or rather the matter of the heart. The young man's riches was his god. Being righteous, being a good man and following his religion made him feel good on the outside but inside was empty, that something missing; and only knowing God, having a right relationship with Him, can fill the empty space inside. "You shall have no other gods before me."

And telling him he would have treasure in heaven sounded as if Jesus was trying to take things away from him now. But I think we know it was quite the reverse of that for Jesus



was wanting to give him something more than all of his gold and silver his reputation and his standing in the community; Jesus was trying to give him everything that really matters in a life, in a person. The issue here is what is in the man's heart and, yes, indeed, what is in our hearts.

Jesus takes nothing from us, He give us everything – if we follow him, if we have a heart for Him. For the young man the time had come to realise that all he owned, owned him. His possessions possessed him. We don't have to literally sell everything we have to follow Jesus, but we do have to surrender everything to Him and be willing to walk away from everything for Him.

As Jesus himself said, "In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples." (Luke 14:33)

Note, not give away but give up.

We each must decide on the cost of eternal life –the cost is complete and unconditional surrender to Jesus.

What if Jesus came to us right here and now and told us to sell everything we have, give the money to the poor, and then follow him? Would we be aghast? Would our faces fall as did that of this rich young man? At some point in our lives, we all have to choose in whom or what we place our trust. What we shall value, what will be first in our lives. Right from the time of this story and down the ages, following Jesus means giving up the things that our culture values. It means giving up our own security and comfort and control.

But there is always Jesus' promise that whatever we give up for him will be returned to us a hundredfold, through the richness of knowing him and sharing eternal life with him. We sing, "I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back, the world behind me, the cross before, I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back, no turning back"

"It's not about treasure Harry, no, it's about making a person"