

Commentary on the Gospel for Tue, Aug 19th 2014

Today's first reading from Ezekiel is about the prince of Tyre. The prince of Tyre has accumulated great wealth and power over his years. Sadly for him, he attributes these gifts to himself, becomes haughty of heart, and even refers to himself as a "god!" As a result, God puts the prince "in his place," sending armies to destroy him in order to remind him that he is not a god, but a man. Wow, does this sound familiar? We accomplish a thing or two and begin to feel pretty proud of ourselves - thinking we are "it" and maybe, as well, that we did it all on our own and really don't need God. As we begin to think this way, God typically does not send in the most barbarous of armies to immediately destroy us and put us in our place, but he does occasionally nudge us back to reality by allowing us to stumble or to fail – reminders that we are human and we do need God after all.

Although I am appreciative of all the many gifts that God has given me in this world, I think it is during those times when I stumble or fail a bit when I genuinely see the need for God in my life and thankful for him putting me in my place. It is those times when I take a step back and say, "I can't do this on my own and I need a trusted companion to help me through." And the one I trust most is God. He is the one who reminds me that being haughty or arrogant is not justified when all of my gifts and all my blessings truly come from God.

Today's second reading from Matthew is one that is familiar to many of us. In this reading, Jesus talks to his disciples about how we may enter the kingdom of heaven; specifically, Jesus notes that "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for one who is rich to enter the Kingdom of God." So, is Jesus saying that the accumulation of wealth is bad and with it we may never enter his kingdom? I do not necessarily think so. Possessing material wealth is fine as long as we keep the proper perspective, know these gifts come from God (unlike the prince of Tyre from our first reading), and understand that we must use our riches in a manner consistent with God's teachings. By doing this, we are able to exchange our material wealth for something of greater value – that being spiritual wealth and with it "receive a hundred times more and...inherit eternal life."

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