

Commentary on the Gospel for Mon, May 25th 2015

As Jesus and the man enter into conversation about eternal life, we quickly sense that the conversation will take an unexpected turn. When the man acknowledges that he has kept the commandments “from my youth,” it is as though he wants to say, “What else must I do? There must be something more.”

Jesus’ look of love seems to change everything. With that look he responds, “You are lacking in one thing.” But what is that “one thing?” Jesus continues: the one thing calls for the man to sell his possessions, give to the poor and follow Jesus. The danger is that we might read Jesus’ response as just requiring the keeping of another commandment. “You have done all these things; now do this, give to the poor.” But that would be to miss the purpose of the giving: in giving to the poor, the man would become free to follow Jesus. That is the “one thing” the man lacks in order to find eternal life. To say it another way: eternal life is a life of loving communion which begins here on earth in the following of Jesus. The “look of love” from Jesus to the man can only be received by an unencumbered heart.

The gospel moves us to ask ourselves: what gets in the way of my receiving the “look of love” from Jesus, from responding to that love in following him? For some it may in fact be an attachment to material possessions; we need not be rich to have “many possessions.” For others, those “possessions” may not be material objects. We may cling to fear, to an abiding sense of guilt or shame, to the attitude that only “certain people” can receive the love of Jesus.

Let us pray to receive the look of love from Jesus and ask him what yet prevents us from a greater receiving, a greater living in his love.

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