

Commentary on the Gospel for Sun, Oct 14th 2018

Long ago, I faced the realization that I cannot love - do not have the capacity to love - in the completely unselfish, unwavering, unconditional fashion that God calls me to love. If God is Love Loving, then I am something much, much less.

Long ago, I faced the realization that I cannot be magnanimous and generous in the completely grace-filled, wholly generous fashion of God – God who has given me so much, who asks nothing in return other than my devotion. I am weak and want to retain control of “my” world, my family, my home, selfishly guarding these... as if they were mine.

Were Christ to ask of me what he asked of the rich man in the parable lesson for today (Mark 10: 17-20), that I sell all of my possessions to follow him, I wonder if I might be able to do so, on a good day? Could I turn away from all of my physical, intellectual, emotional and ego attachments to wholly serve my God? I would want to, just as the rich man and the disciples wanted to. But I fear that I could not. There is such an irony in the notion that as a parent, I probably come as close as possible to understanding what it means to unconditionally love, and yet it is my attachment to my role-as-mother and my hopes for my children and grandchild that most remind me how fallible and imperfect I am in my love for God, and in my ability to turn my life over to God’s will. I have to admit that my current hopes and dreams are not other-worldly; rather, they are steadfastly fixed in THIS world, and I lack the faith necessary to wholly commit myself to God. In fact, I recall the first time I read the Suscipe / the Radical Prayer of St. Ignatius of Loyola – it frightened me in its complete submission and I believed I would never be able to come close to such pure devotion:

Take Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, all that I have and possess. Thou hast given all to me. To Thee, O lord, I return it. All is Thine, dispose of it wholly according to Thy will. Give me Thy love and thy grace, for this is sufficient for me. ~Ignatius Loyola

So where does that leave me, other than trying to crawl through the eye of the needle along with my friend, the camel? Despite my deep failure to love and love generously, the truth is that God understands. God created me to be wholly human and wholly imperfect, wholly incapable of the kind of love that God alone can provide. God has chosen me, and I have chosen God: God loves me anyway. I am so grateful for this truth that what I can do is strive. I can live in community and solidarity with others and share, to the best of my ability, the gifts that God has provided; I can co-create a community in which others are safe and empowered to share their gifts as well. I can work to ensure that the resources that God first entrusted to all of us – what Pope Francis calls “Our Common Home”- are cared for and distributed equitably, according to need. I can open my heart to give love, show respect and spread peace.

While these efforts may fall short of what Jesus asked of the man, I choose to believe that in striving, we are fulfilling God’s call. I pray today for courage and faith for our journeys, and for our striving.

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