

Brothers & Sisters...

Oct 12-13, 2024

Indeed the Word of God is living and effective...

sharper than any two-edged sword...

penetrating even between soul and spirit, joints and marrow.

I had to smile when I read that line

from the letter to the Hebrews.

It reminded me of my friend, Jack,

who I met at Yellowstone County Lock-up.

He would tell me he was going

to give someone a spiritual *shiv* today.

If you don't know what a *shiv* is...that is good.

It tells me you have never been to prison.

I will try rather to penetrate your spirit

the old-fashioned way...and just preach.

In our Gospel today from Mark...

the young man in our story asks a question of Jesus...

that I hope all of us have asked:

"Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Jesus replies to the young man with the laws given to Moses...

the 10 Commandments. "You shall not kill. You shall not steal.

Honor your father and your mother."

The young man had observed these laws since his youth.

But Jesus asks the young man for more.

Jesus asks the young man to give up his wealth and security and follow him.

Many would say that the young man had his heart in the right place... observing the laws given to Moses by God.

The young man may have been somewhat generous with his wealth but Jesus asked for the young man's entire life.

The response to Jesus' challenge to sell all and come follow him indicated a hesitancy to put Jesus ahead of his life of financial security.

This young man's possessions were the reason for his life... even though he had Jesus, our Lord and Savior, right before his eyes.

The lesson is obvious...love God... and don't make wealth the end game of life.

In the second part of the Gospel Jesus asks his disciples,

"How hard is it for those who have wealth to enter into the kingdom of heaven?"

Peter is uncomfortable with Jesus' teaching.

You see...people in Jesus' time and culture were led to believe that if you had wealth it was a sign that you had been blessed by God.

Jesus is telling the disciples

how hard it is to enter the Kingdom of God.

You heard it read today...the camel...the needle.

The "eye of a needle" was used to describe

a small entryway into the cities when they were walled up.

This entrance was designed for a single person

to enter without baggage.

What "baggage" do you try to bring with you as you journey through life?

Do you desire only what you need or do you desire more?

The writer of the Book of Wisdom speaks of their prayers

and their pleading, "I prayed, and prudence was given me;

I pleaded, and the spirit of wisdom came to me."

What do you pray and plead for? A nice car?

Lots of money? What is our treasure?

For this writer of Wisdom, it is not earthly riches.

It was the "spirit of wisdom."

They saw earthly riches as nothing

in comparison to the wisdom of God.

The rich will have a hard time but not an impossible time

entering into the Kingdom of God.

Peter then asked, "Who can be saved?"

The lesson is: do not focus entirely on possessions

and realize that the greatest things in life

do not come without sacrifice.

The Gospel then answers with the disciples saying,

"We have given up everything and followed you."

For all things are possible with God.

Peter and the other disciples have given up everything...

family...jobs...material things...

and followed Jesus and the Gospel.

Jesus promises that his disciples will become

a new family that will live together in eternal life.

Their sacrifices do have meaning.

I see this Gospel today in the people of Florida & North Carolina.

2 Hurricanes have taken all possessions away from people

and I have seen many people say,

"The most important thing is that our family is still alive."

I have seen many good Samaritans

leave their comfortable lives behind to help strangers in need.

The good deeds these Samaritans are doing

is the treasure in Heaven that the Gospel talks about.

Brothers and Sisters...I will pull my.... spiritual *shiv*.

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