

## Quotations

**1**

The service that counts is the service that costs.

Howard Hendricks b.1924

**2**

We find freedom when we find God; we lose it when we lose him,

Paul E. Scherer (Lutheran minister)

**4**

God sets the soul long, weary, impossible tasks, yet is satisfied by the first sincere proof that obedience is intended, and takes the burden away forthwith.

Coventry Patmore 1823–96

## Related topics

*For further study:*

Materialism; Social Justice; Stewardship; Illness and Healing; Presence of God

## Closing Prayer

God of wisdom,  
whose word probes the motives of our hearts,  
with you all things are possible.

Let worldly treasure not keep us from Jesus,  
who looks on us with love.  
Free us to leave all things and follow him,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
God for ever and ever.

Collect for 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B<sup>2</sup>

## Proper 23

*(Sunday between 9 and 15 October inclusive)*

### Ordinary Time, week 28

### Principal Service readings

Amos 5.6-7,10-15

'Seek good and not evil, that you may live'

Psalm 90.12-17

Plea for wisdom and help

Hebrews 4.12-16

Through Jesus our great high priest we can approach the throne of grace with boldness

Mark 10.17-31

The rich man and the challenge of voluntary poverty

### Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,  
speak to our hearts in the stillness,  
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,  
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;  
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

### Gospel Reading

#### The rich young man

<sup>17</sup>As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, 'Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' <sup>18</sup>Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. <sup>19</sup>You know the commandments: "You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honour your father and mother." ' <sup>20</sup>He said to him, 'Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth.' <sup>21</sup>Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, 'You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.' <sup>22</sup>When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

#### The danger of riches

<sup>23</sup>Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, 'How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!' <sup>24</sup>And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, 'Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! <sup>25</sup>It is easier for

<sup>2</sup> *Opening Prayers : Scripture-related Collects for years A, B and C from The Sacramentary / International Commission on English in the Liturgy, 1997.*

a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.’<sup>26</sup> They were greatly astounded and said to one another, ‘Then who can be saved?’<sup>27</sup> Jesus looked at them and said, ‘For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible.’

### **The reward of renunciation**

<sup>28</sup>Peter began to say to him, ‘Look, we have left everything and followed you.’<sup>29</sup> Jesus said, ‘Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news,<sup>30</sup> who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age – houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions – and in the age to come eternal life.<sup>31</sup> But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.’

Mark 10.17-31 NRSV<sup>1</sup>

### **Comments and Questions**

The young man is a successful person, but realises that something is lacking. He wants more than to succeed in earthly life and desires ‘eternal life’ (not ‘everlasting life’, a prolonging of current life).

The man has a sense of urgency and is respectful to Jesus, calling him ‘good teacher’ (v.17).

Jesus is not denying his own goodness, but challenges the young man about whether he really means it, as well as pointing out that all goodness comes from God.

Jesus assumes a knowledge of the ten commandments as a foundation. How much do we keep them in mind?

The man follows the commandments but has not found peace. How helpful is it to follow rules and laws? What else might we turn to to help us?

It would be easy for the man to be smug – he was successful and upright, and wealth was seen as a blessing from God. What might stop him feeling self-satisfied?

Jesus discerns the root of the problem immediately – he is attached to his possessions, and this prevents him from following Jesus, even though he wants to. What things hamper our discipleship?

Is it unrealistic to expect someone to give everything they have to the poor? The danger of riches: (a) depending on possessions for happiness; (b) being too concerned about our possessions; (c) using possessions for power, status or security.

Monks and nuns and ‘Basic Christian Communities’ (as seen in Latin America) manage to give away their goods and share with others (cf Acts 2.44). Are you acquainted with such a community? If not, perhaps you could get to know one.

The disciples are amazed by Jesus’ teaching (v.23), because they see possessions as a sign of God’s favour. Is this how we view it too?

Jesus uses an absurd illustration to get across a point (v.25). Why does he do this and what is his point?

To be saved means to enter the kingdom of God (v.26).

What human beings cannot do by their own efforts, God can do (v.27).

In contrast to the rich man, Peter and the disciples have left everything. What will be their reward? he asks.

Leaving home and family life is not good in itself, but if it is ‘for my sake and the sake of the gospel’ (v.29) then there will be abundant blessing both now and in the future. What could be the ‘hundredfold now in this age’? How does the promised ‘eternal life’ (v.30), relate to such blessings.

‘Many who are first will be last ...’ (v.31) – Jesus says this several times (cf 9.35; 10.43). He emphasises leadership through service, not through status. ‘Upside down’ thinking is a repeated theme in the passage as a whole. How can Jesus’ meaning work out in the way we are as the church?

Should Christians today sell all that they have and give to the poor? Choose an option: (a) No. Jesus was talking about a specific situation; (b) Yes, but only some people are able to do so; (c) No. Selling everything is just an extreme example of letting go of possessions – people need to be less attached to things; (d) No, we don’t need to sell everything but we do need to give away a lot of what we have to the poor.

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<sup>1</sup> *New Revised Standard Version Bible* is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.