

28th Sunday in Ordinary Time • B

Christ the King • October 9-10, 2009

When you think about someone who “has it all together,” don’t you think of a man or woman who is well educated, nicely clothed, brimming with integrity, who is faithful to friends, successful in his or her chosen profession, and is admired by others? Isn’t that who we meet in today’s Gospel? In this brief story from Mark, we meet a first century man who, in the eyes of all who knew him, had it all together.

One day, this well-educated, rich man comes to our Lord. His question is ours. He asked, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” If you were Jesus, how would you answer? There are many answers to this age-old question: Go to church. Be good. Be nice. Believe in God. Do good deeds. But notice the answer Jesus gave. When Jesus reminded him of the Ten Commandments, he blurted out, “Oh, I’ve kept all those since I was young.” But his silence suggests more words. Under his breath, I can hear him add, “But is there something I’m missing?”

Mark tells us that Jesus did more than just look at him, he “loved him.” In fact, our Lord loved him so much he offered him a difficult choice to answer his question. “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.” What did he do? The story says that when he heard this, “he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.” The treasure he possessed so proudly actually possessed him. He was their prisoner.

So, what is going on here? What is Jesus saying to us? First of all, Jesus is inviting each one of us to look into our own heart. He isn’t saying that money or wealth is bad. But he is inviting us to answer this question: “what do you own, and what owns you?”

I invite you take a moment and think about that question, 'what do you own and what owns you?'

The last part of the question, 'what owns you', is difficult. The man in today's Gospel was owned by his possessions. He allowed what he possessed to possess him. Imprisoned by his possessions, he is now the one who is owned. He was caught in a vicious trap.

I wonder whatever happened to this man; wouldn't it be nice to know 'the rest of the story?' Maybe we have to write it in how we live our lives. Mark does give us some keys to unlock this trap. Remember that Jesus looks at us with love. Jesus reminds us that all we have, all that we are, is gift from a loving and gracious God. These gifts have been freely given to us. We don't really own these gifts; they belong to God. We are simply called to be good stewards of these gifts. Life is to be cherished, shared and given back to the Lord with increase. In the end, our status and prestige won't matter; nor will our bank balance or stock portfolio. When we remember that God is the owner, and that we have all that we need, then our possessions can no longer own us.

Jesus reminds us that what really matters are:

- how we share ourselves and our gifts with others;
- how we nurture and developed all God's gifts;
- and how we return our gifts and blessings with increase.

So, what do you own and what owns you?