

# ***Sell all and Follow***

## ***Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)***

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# **Sunday, October 10, 2021**

I wonder if you have ever thought very much about the young man in our story from the Gospel. The young man is often referred to as the rich young ruler, because Jesus refers to him as to having many possessions. This is unfortunate as this tends to colour our understanding of the passage. When we hear of him referred to as rich, we tend to get the impression that he is a wealthy man, and we see him as a type of James Packer or of similar ilk. The problem is that when we come to thinking of people as rich, we do so in a relative way. People rarely perceive themselves as rich preferring to see themselves as comfortable and that others are the rich ones. But this is the problem for as long as we are thinking in relative terms, then we fail to see that we are actually rich. Even the poorest in our community is considerably better off than those in the third world. And the average primary child in our society is often materially better off than most Adults in the poorer countries. Jesus is not talking about him as rich, but as having many possessions. In this way, this young man is therefore like us, and should not be seen as a type of James Packer figure. So how does this incident inform us on our faith journey.

Well if this young man is like us, then his experience could be ours. Let us take a look at him. Jesus does not suggest that he is a bad man. Indeed his own testimony suggests that he lived a good life, obeyed God's laws and in this way he could be any member of this congregation. It was apparent that he had reached the position that in spite of being a pillar of the community, he felt unsatisfied. His thought was that there was something missing in his life. He had tried to find the path to eternal life and yet he lacked any assurance in this way.

It was in this dilemma that Jesus met him. The texts suggests that Jesus looked at him and loved him. Jesus did not write him off, but he in fact saw a potential in him and that he was certainly on his way to finding Eternal Life. But I don't think that he expected what Jesus would say. Sell all you possess, give away what you get to the poor and follow. This nameless young man turned away – he could not give up what he had to get what he most desired.

In the subsequent dialogue, Jesus points out that it is almost impossible for humankind to find salvation but not for God. The disciples, who had taken that step of following were promised that they would see their reward.

But what about you and I. I guess that the first point is to ask the question = Have you been confronted by Jesus? It is easy for us to make excuses in this materialistically dominated society. We can take the relative viewpoint that we are not as rich or well off as someone else. But are these riches trapping us. I have heard the story of catching monkeys by placing a treat in a coconut with a small opening in it. The monkey will put the hand inside the hole and take hold of the treat and in making a fist is unable to withdraw it. To be free, the monkey only needs to let go, but because the can't or won't they remain trapped.

When Jesus challenged the young man about his hanging onto his possessions, he was in as much saying your possessions and what they represent have hold of you. But what about you? Jesus asks us as well to sell all and follow. He is asking us to put all that we have and all that we are into the work of the kingdom. This may not mean a physical selling up, but what is it that you are hanging onto? Things –well these are obvious, but what about other things? Family, Security, Land. One of the things I used to talk to our youth groups about was about their dedication to God's work. Church attendance is not the be all and end all measure, but to ask the question. What were you doing the last time you weren't here? This is an insight on your priorities and a good self test. If we see the Eucharist as a divine appointment with God, the why is it we are not here?

But it isn't my job to judge you or your job to judge others, but like the rich young ruler, we need to confront our faith, and ask if we are going through the motions, or prepared to sacrifice all for the sake of the kingdom. This is not about what you are doing for God, or what you have done in the past, but right now Jesus asks us (in love) what is it that is preventing us from doing God's work? For like the rich young ruler's possessions these will also prevent us from receiving Eternal Life.

So are you game to ask? What must I do to find eternal life? In Matthew's Gospel, we are warned that it is not everyone who says Lord, Lord who is on the way to salvation, only him who does the will of the Father. The word of God for today is a challenge for us and as Hebrews reminds us, *Indeed the word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating even between soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and able to discern reflections and thoughts of the heart. No creature is concealed from him, but everything is naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must render an account.* Let us ask God to show us what are the obstacles for us and pray for the courage to do something about it.

**AMEN**