

A long, dark bridge spans across the ocean under a vibrant sunset sky with orange, pink, and purple hues. The bridge's structure is silhouetted against the bright horizon. The water in the foreground is calm, reflecting the colors of the sky.

Daily Reflections

August 17, 2020

Scripture

Matthew 19:16-22

A young man approached Jesus and said,
“Teacher, what good must I do to gain eternal life?”
He answered him, “Why do you ask me about the good?
There is only One who is good.
If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.”
He asked him, “Which ones?”
And Jesus replied, “You shall not kill;
you shall not commit adultery;
you shall not steal;
you shall not bear false witness;
honor your father and your mother;
and you shall love your neighbor as yourself.”
The young man said to him,
“All of these I have observed. What do I still lack?”
Jesus said to him, “If you wish to be perfect, go,
sell what you have and give to the poor,
and you will have treasure in heaven.
Then come, follow me.”
When the young man heard this statement, he went away sad,
for he had many possessions.

Our Scripture Reflection

A rich young man approaches Jesus for His opinion as to what he must do in terms of the Law in order to obtain eternal life. He is looking for a legalistic answer. So Jesus gives him some legalistic answers using the Commandments as His point of reference.

After hearing the Lord's list, the man acknowledges that he has obeyed them all. But because Jesus expected more than a rigid legalism, that is, a head trip for salvation, He goes after the man's heart. And it is there that Jesus exposes the rich man's spiritual bankruptcy. He is stingy, knotted up at the heart. He is, therefore, unfit to be a disciple. Jesus much to our amazement allows the man to walk away!

Does Jesus expect all people to give everything away as a condition of discipleship? Of course not! There are two attitudes that he permits with regard to wealth and possessions:

1. The first, and the one Jesus expects of the rich young man is "Radical Renunciation." In other words there are certain people whom the Lord calls to give it all away. Mother Teresa of Calcutta was a classic example of this type of person.
2. The second is what I call a "Moderate Renunciation." There are those who while not called to give everything up, are nonetheless, called to use their wealth and possessions to further the spread of the Gospel.

The bottom line is this: When the Lord calls us to do something, He knows before He calls what we are capable of doing. Therefore, He TRUSTS us to do what is right IN HIS EYES. Whether we give away a little or a lot, we must remember that everything we possess belongs to Him in the first place. Giving is never about the size of the gift. Rather, giving is about the attitude of the heart of the giver. Our gifts can help or hinder our work as disciples.

Food for your Journey

Did you know we are more worried, more nervous and uneasy, more depressed and anxious than previous eras?

So, what's going on?

There's many factors but, one reason, brought up on multiple occasions by psychologists, is the luxury (as ungrateful as it sounds) of too much choice. With so many options available, there is no excuse for making the less-than-perfect choice.

The trendy grocery store chain, Trader Joe's, discovered (through market research) that people feel conflicted about what to purchase when, for example, there are over 20 different brands of peanut butter from which to choose. Trader Joe's reduced this number to three or four — fewer options actually limits customer anxiety.

Only in a nation of abundance would multiple choices of peanut butter help to fuel our already anxious tendencies.

Anxiety has become the poisonous side effect of good people wobbling on the edges of idolatry, where we trust worry, fear and stuff more than God.

—Heather Wood Davis, "Anxious stewardship," website of Center for Stewardship Leaders, Luther Seminary. luthersem.edu. Retrieved January 29, 2019.

A Prayer from the Heart

Dearest Jesus, You gave everything for my salvation. Help me, Lord, to grow beyond my selfishness and self concern so that I may imitate Your generosity. Amen