

**The Camel and the “Eye of the Needle”
(28th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B)**

Wisdom 7:7-11—Solomon the Spirit of Wisdom

1. Wealth: “as nothing” in comparison to “wisdom” (Greek *sophia*) (7:7)
2. Health and Beauty: are “nothing” compared to wisdom (7:10-11)
3. Spiritual Wealth: “all good things came to me along with her,” true “wealth” (7:11)

Psalm 90—Fill Us with Your Love, Lord

1. Wisdom: “teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom” (90:12)

Hebrews 4:12-13—The Word of God

1. Word of God: “living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword” (4:12)

Mark 10:17-30—What Must I Do to Inherit Eternal Life?

1. Rich Man: “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” (10:17)
2. Jesus’ Response: a question and a declaration (10:18)
 - a. “Why do you call me good?”
 - b. “No one is good *but God alone*” (Greek *heis ho theos*, literally, “the one God”)
3. The Ten Commandments: Jesus focuses on 2nd Tablet (cf. Exodus 20)
 - a. Murder (5th)
 - b. Adultery (6th)
 - c. Theft/Fraud (7th)
 - d. False Witness (8th)
 - e. Honoring Parents (4th)
4. Jesus Adds Something to the Decalogue! (10:21)
 - a. Almsgiving: “Sell what you have, *give to the poor*”
 - b. Discipleship: “come, *follow me*,” then you will have “treasure in heaven”
5. The Dangers of Wealth: “How difficult for those who have riches to enter...” (10:23)
 - a. Aphorism: the “camel” passing through the “eye of a needle”
 - b. “Impossible” for human beings, but “all things possible with God” (10:27)
6. The Poverty of the Disciples: “we have left *everything* and followed you” (10:28)

The Living Tradition: “No One is Good But God Alone”?

John Chrysostom: When he [Jesus] says, “No one is good,” *he does not say this to show that he is not good; far from it*. For he does not say, “Why do you call me good? I am not good” but “No one is good,” that is, no human being. (John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew*, 63.1)

Ambrose of Milan: The Lord, then, does not deny His goodness... For when the scribe said, “Good Master,” the Lord answered, “Why do you call me good?” (Ambrose, *Exposition of the Christian Faith*, 2.1.19).

The Living Tradition and the “Needle’s Eye”

Glossa Ordinaria: [A]t Jerusalem there was a certain gate, called, ‘The needle’s eye’,

through which a camel could not pass, but on its bended knees, and after its burden had been taken off; and so the rich should not be able to pass along the narrow way that leads to life, till he had put off the burden of sin, and of riches, that is, by ceasing to love them. (Attributed to Anselm; quoted in Thomas Aquinas, *Catena Aurea* on Matt 19:26).

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (28th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B)

1. What do you think of Wisdom’s comparison between earthly wealth and spiritual wisdom? Is this a realistic view? If it is true, how should it affect our daily lives?

2. Why does Jesus say that it is so difficult for wealthy people to enter the kingdom of heaven? Is he serious, or is he being hyperbolic?

3. When Jesus says “no one is good but God alone” (Mark 10:18), is he denying that he is God? If not, why not? How has this text been interpreted in the living Tradition?

For Further Study

1. Mary Healy. *The Gospel of Mark*. Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008. Pp. 201-209.
2. Edith Barnecut, *Journey with the Fathers: Commentaries on the Sunday Gospels Year B* (Hyde Park: New City Press, 1993), 124-25.