

28th Sunday of the Year (B)

October 14, 2018

The Book of Wisdom 7:7-11

Psalm 90

Hebrews 4:12-13

Mark 10:17-30

One Saturday, a very successful businessman was hard at work washing his car as a four-year-old watched from a distance. He gradually made his way up the driveway as the man wiped off the hood and fenders. He said, "That's a beautiful care, Mister."

In his hands, Danny held three or four sticks of gum and, after chatting for a few minutes, Danny asked, "Would you like to buy a piece of gum? They're only a penny."

"Sure," the man said. "I'd like a piece of gum." He paid Danny his penny and popped the gum into his mouth. Then the businessman asked, "Have you ever considered the economics of your proposition? Have you figured the prophet ratio? Have you included your labor and overhead?"

Danny was about ready to ease his way back down the driveway, when he said, "I don't know about that kind of stuff. I'm only four years old."

The businessman went on to explain to Danny that he couldn't make a profit selling his gum at a penny a stick when the pack cost much more than that. "Unless you've got a tax angle, this deal is a loser."

With a puzzled look on his face Danny said, "But it doesn't work that way. Usually people give me a nickel or a dime and even one time a quarter, and they don't take my gum."

It has been some time since that businessman had any young children in his home. His son and daughter were grown and now on their own. He had long forgotten what it was like to listen to a four-year-old. His love of business, making a profit, being a success all made him somewhat blind to those around him and put him at a distance from the treasures of the kingdom of God: love, service, joy, and hope.

The sacred word today, I think, puts us in the juxtaposition of the young and the old, the poor and the wealthy, being secure in an earthly sense and being secure in the treasures of heaven. I would say that the lessons today invite us to contemplate that the spiritual journey is the movement from time to eternity.

We associate wisdom with years and experience that affords us a deeper understanding of life. In the first lesson we have the re-interpretation of the prayer of Solomon. God answers that prayer with an abundance of wisdom that Solomon esteems more than power and wealth, precious gems or honors. The psalm that

follows reminds us that all wisdom is the gift of God's faithful love that sustains us in time, anticipating what is eternal.

This lesson from the Book of Wisdom introduces us to the gospel where a young man comes eagerly and respectfully to Jesus. Unlike many of the Pharisees who test Jesus, this young man is humble for he wants to know, he wants to learn. As he addresses Jesus as "Good Teacher," Jesus reminds him that it is God who is good. Jesus' human presence and mission is to make present among us the abundant and unfathomable goodness of God. The eternal life that the man is seeking is a gift from God. When Jesus places the man within his own faith tradition, quoting to him some of the "social commands" of the 10 Commandments, the man replies that all his life he has kept these commands. With love Jesus now gives him the radical answer that the radical question deserves. Jesus asks this young man to discard everything, to extend God's love to the poor, leaving himself dependent on nothing but treasures in heaven. The man came seeking eternal life and Jesus said he must stand before God dispossessed. The young man went away sad for he apparently had many possessions. He was not yet ready to part with his wealth, his earthly security, his trust in his own self.

Youth is the operative word here in this encounter. This is a young man's spirituality, all eagerness, energy, and most of all, in contemporary terms, ego. Jesus is about to take him to another level. What the young man has done up to this moment has brought him to Jesus, and this is what Jesus sees. He has completed a phase and another phase awaits him. Jesus does not critique the young man but he complements him. Love is the driving force of what Jesus will offer him. He challenges him to consider a different attitude, a different energy, needed to gain eternal life. How does one receive life from a good God? Treasure in heaven means that what he must value above all else is his relationship with God. Relinquishing his possessions to the poor, starts the process. Following Jesus will develop and deepen a relationship with a good God and the ultimate gift of eternal life.

We are each on a spiritual journey. The project is to live in time and be centered in eternity; to be in the world but not of the world (John 15). We still have to own things, accumulate some wealth, and plan for the future. Spiritual wisdom is the blending of time and eternity, to have possessions yet, at the same time, to disown them.

With an open heart we have heard the sacred word. We move to the altar to learn, to take hold of, and to receive Christ!