

## The Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

### Matthew 19:16-26

And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible. (KJV)

Possessions impeded the man in the current Gospel from a life of perfection. The man said he had lived according to the commandments. He was unwilling to give up his possessions to follow Christ and to seek eternal life.

Believers are born into this world with the blessing of life from God. Believers take no earthly possessions with them when they depart this life. Jesus Christ defined the steps the rich man was to take in his desire for eternal life.

The rich man's desire for eternal life was not complete. This is a Gospel lesson for believers to assess their personal commitment to Jesus Christ. At Baptism the full person is dedicated and committed to Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is the defining standard for all that a believer does from the time of Baptism until departure from this life. All personal thoughts, actions and goals of the believer are to conform to the teachings, life and way of Jesus Christ.

We know from Christ's teachings that the way to eternal life is narrow and difficult, (Mt. 7:14) Adhering to the narrow path throughout life requires strength, wisdom and knowledge from Jesus Christ.

Following the path defined and illumined by Christ entails decisions that are pleasing to Christ. When a believer stumbles, makes errors or takes a wrong turn, repentance is necessary. God's forgiveness and mercy are necessary and beneficial.

Attraction to possessions can cloud the believer's mind and influence personal actions. Desire for material possessions can consume an individual's or family's interests and energy.

Husbands and wives may differ over the interest in acquiring material possessions. Children may be raised to pursue material wealth with little thought given to the care of their souls.

Parents, family members and friends set examples for the youths in their midst in the goals they adopt and pursue. When the Kingdom of God is the priority, the accumulation and managing of material wealth is put in perspective.

The present Gospel calls upon believers to assess the degree of personal investment in the Kingdom of God. The Gospel raises the question: “Are material possessions more important than possessing eternal life?”

Today’s Gospel uncovers the most prized part of the rich man’s heart. The man’s possessions are what he prized the most. He prized his possessions more than eternal life.

Parents are challenged by the present Gospel to consider the goals being established for their children. Mothers and fathers are asked to examine if they are raising their sons and daughters with the goal of eternal life?

Not all believers are parents. Questions regarding personal values apply to all believers. Honestly examining the heart, mind and soul will reveal the true interests and goals of personal life.

The present Gospel is a measuring statement for personal and family values. Do individuals and parents devote so much effort to work for material possessions that little time and energy are left to pursue the Kingdom of God?

The hunger of the soul is not satisfied by the accumulation of material possessions. The desire for God and eternal life comes through centering the heart, mind and soul in Christ.

Our relationship with Jesus Christ is defined in our personal relationships in the home, at work and in the community. The way we live with and treat each other reveals whether Jesus Christ, God’s Kingdom and eternal life are primary interests,

When Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God are the primary interests in life, all other aspects of life take their proper place. Relationships, goals and possessions in life are to be viewed in accord with Christ’s teachings and example.

At Baptism, belief in Christ is professed as King and as God. Daily life until departure from this life is to be lived in accord with Christ being King and God. Personal possessions and pursuits are to conform to the path to God’s Kingdom.

Love and honor for the Lord God are revealed in the way the believer lives after exiting the Baptismal font until departure from this life. In the end, each person will stand before the returning Christ for the Great and Final Judgment.

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The Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost. Holy Prophet Micah. Forefeast of the Dormition. August 14/27, 2023. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania.

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