



SUNDAY 10 OCTOBER 2021

Hexham & Newcastle

The Parishes of: Bishop Auckland || Newton Aycliffe & Shildon || Willington
Crook, Tow Law & Wolsingham || Tudhoe || Coundon, Ferryhill & Windlestone

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

Twenty Eighth Sunday of the Year (B) : Mark 10: 17-30

"What I'd like to say to Jesus", Frankie told me over a pint pot of industrial strength Yorkshire brew, "the problem with money is that I don't have enough of it! It's all very well telling rich people, fat cats and tax dodgers to share their cash, but short of a miracle, that's not going to happen is it? Trying to make ends meet is a constant juggling act and it wears you down."

Jesus' advice to the rich man to give his money to the poor and to come and follow him came across as a step too far. The Lord is not advocating poverty but the reverse - no one should be poor if we can share and disperse what we have in excess of our needs.

Money and possessions can be addictive in obvious and even subtle ways. They can become features by which we measure ourselves and introduce or worsen a lack of sensibility or a blindness towards the welfare of others not so well-heeled. In today's Gospel story we don't know if the rich man earned or inherited his wealth but his attachment to it is clear. Notice he now wants to 'inherit' eternal life. Is this a sign of a drive to acquire more? Is it a genuine plea for something that surpasses material gain?

So Jesus tests him. He quotes the commandments relating to how we treat people, how we show respect and patently avoid using others to our advantage. It's an important reminder in the face of 'acquiring' more. The man passes the test. Jesus' gaze of love becomes not the answer to the man's question but the prelude to a solution. He invites him to a treasure not of this world. The 'man of great wealth' went away sad. To dispense with the safety and insulation provided by his bank balance appeared to be a step too far.

For my pal Frankie and the rest of us, wealth is unlikely to be what holds us back from following Jesus. For us it may be other attachments, habits, outlooks and things we don't get round to doing something about. It may be our relationships and attitudes we're reluctant to consider more seriously that get in the way of following Jesus more completely.

The rich man seems well principled in important ways but he's seeking something more. The goodness he identifies in Jesus appears to be part of a yearning beyond ordinary life and wealth. He went off sad - hopefully to think. Did he ever come back? We don't know. Would you?



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Pope Francis on politics

In the face of many petty forms of politics focussed on immediate interests, I would repeat that true statecraft is manifest when, in difficult times, we uphold high principles and think of the long term common good. Political powers do not find it easy to assume this duty in the work of nation building, much less in forging a common project for the human family, now and in the future. Thinking of those who will come after us does not serve electoral purposes, yet it is what authentic justice demands. As the Bishops of Portugal have taught, the earth is lent to each generation, to be handed on to the generation that follows.

Global society is suffering from grave structural deficiencies that cannot be resolved by piecemeal solutions or quick fixes. Much needs to change, through fundamental reform and major renewal. Only a healthy politics, involving the most diverse sectors and skills, is capable of overseeing this process. An economy that is an integral part of a political, social, cultural and popular programme directed to the common good could pave the way for different possibilities which do not involve stifling human creativity and its ideals of progress, but rather directing that energy along new channels.

Fratelli tutti paras 178-9