**Readings for October 13, 2024 – 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

‘All Things are Possible’

*Living like Jesus is hard, yet Jesus reassures us, “all things are possible with God!” Living in love and trust, we will have what we need to get it right. God fills us – with love, and with everything we need.*

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**Opening Prayer:** Heavenly Father, we ask you today: teach us, fill us, help us to get things right. Help us to have greater trust in your care for us. Help us to see the great possibilities that God wants to set before us. We thank you for bringing us together again this week, and we ask for the grace to listen and hear each other. Amen

Reading I [**Wis 7:7-11**](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/wisdom/7?7)

    I prayed, and prudence was given me; I pleaded, and the spirit of wisdom came to me.
    I preferred her to scepter and throne, and deemed riches nothing in comparison with her,
        nor did I liken any priceless gem to her; because all gold, in view of her, is a little sand,
        and before her, silver is to be accounted mire. Beyond health and comeliness I loved her,
    and I chose to have her rather than the light, because the splendor of her never yields to sleep.
    Yet all good things together came to me in her company, and countless riches at her hands.

**Responsorial Psalm** [**Ps 90:12-13, 14-15, 16-17**](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/psalms/90?12)

**R. (14)    Fill us with your love, O Lord, and we will sing for joy!**Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain wisdom of heart.
Return, O LORD! How long? Have pity on your servants!
**R. Fill us with your love, O Lord, and we will sing for joy!**Fill us at daybreak with your kindness, that we may shout for joy and gladness all our days.
Make us glad, for the days when you afflicted us, for the years when we saw evil.
**R. Fill us with your love, O Lord, and we will sing for joy!**Let your work be seen by your servants and your glory by their children;
and may the gracious care of the LORD our God be ours;
    prosper the work of our hands for us! Prosper the work of our hands!
**R. Fill us with your love, O Lord, and we will sing for joy!**

Reading II [**Heb 4:12-13**](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/hebrews/4?12)

Brothers and sisters: Indeed the word of God is living and effective,
sharper than any two-edged sword,
penetrating even between soul and spirit, joints and marrow,
and able to discern reflections and thoughts of the heart.
No creature is concealed from him,
but everything is naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must render an account.

Gospel [**Mk 10:17-30**](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/mark/10?2)

As Jesus was setting out on a journey, a man ran up, knelt down before him, and asked him,
"Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"
Jesus answered him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone.
You know the commandments: *You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery;
you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness;
you shall not defraud; honor your father and your mother*."
He replied and said to him, "Teacher, all of these I have observed from my youth."
Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said to him, "You are lacking in one thing.
Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor
and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." At that statement his face fell,
and he went away sad, for he had many possessions. Jesus looked around and said to his disciples,
"How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!"
The disciples were amazed at his words. So Jesus again said to them in reply,
"Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God!
It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle
than for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."
They were exceedingly astonished and said among themselves,
"Then who can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said,
"For human beings it is impossible, but not for God. All things are possible for God."
Peter began to say to him, "We have given up everything and followed you."
Jesus said, "Amen, I say to you,
there is no one who has given up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the sake of the gospel
who will not receive a hundred times more now in this present age: houses and brothers and sisters
and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and eternal life in the age to come."

Related Reflections

**Possessed by possessions:** The rich man is cut to the core [by Jesus’s words in today’s Gospel]. In the middle of the interchange, we read that Jesus loves him and looks at him, but the Greek points us in a slightly different direction. Jesus, who does love this man, does not so much look *at* him as he looks *into* him. Jesus isn’t interested in how the man appears. Sure, he looks like an upstanding, law-abiding citizen. But Jesus can see his heart, and his heart is possessed by his possessions.

So many of Jesus’ signs and miracles, particularly in Mark’s narrative, are exorcisms. The casting out of demons. Jesus, looking into this man’s heart, sees a demon of the man’s own making. He suffers from possession possession. He cannot let go of his things because his things will not let go of him. Instead, he lets go of Jesus and walks away in grief. He came with the best of intentions but with a sickness in his heart that was nothing less than idolatry. Given the choice – *the choice* – between Jesus and his stuff, he chooses his stuff.

So, what do we do? That’s the wrong question. There is nothing we can do to inherit eternal life, and nothing we need to do. They say you can’t take it with you when you die. Well, I suppose the only thing to do then is drop dead. To be set free of our possessions and all that possesses us, we need to die. In walks Christ, looking into us, loving us, dying for us that we might be pierced with the two-edged sword that brings life through death. Perhaps this is why babies sometimes cry when they’re baptized. They know, deep down, that this is not some cute ritual. It is a matter of death and life – but always, thank God *always*, in that order. Out of death, paved with the best of intentions, we are drawn by Christ into newness of life. Alive, we are called now to live like it.

About 750 years before the coming of Christ, Amos prophesied to the people of Israel. During the time of Amos, under the rule of Jeroboam II, things seemed to be going well. The well-to-do had it made. Their wealth was built, however, upon the backs of the poor. And not because they were hardworking folks who earned it while the poor were lazy ne’er-do-wells. No, the rich were rich because they were cheats who were willing to game the system – they were willing to *create* a system – to subvert the economy and corrupt the courts of law so that they could trample on the poor.

And why were they willing to do this? Because they had abandoned worship of the one true God. It turns out that having something that’s not God at the center of their lives led them to treat other humans as disposable, mostly so they could get more junk for themselves. Amos’s message has not lost its relevance. God has not changed God’s mind about what is expected of us. Love God. Love neighbor. Everything else is a self-serving lie leading nowhere. Receiving the promises of God as gifts, we are free to do what God expects of us.

Today is a wonderful reminder of the simple truth that there’s no way out. The world continues to whisper: *Get all you can. Trample on others in the process. Hold something in your heart other than God*. But none of it will get you anywhere. You are trapped. Undone. Buried under all the things to which you cling. Well, good news: Jesus does his best work with those who are dead and buried.

There’s nothing you can do to inherit the Kingdom. You might as well drop dead. Seriously. Because then God can raise you. Your possessions lose possession of you. The Spirit reclaims God’s rightful spot in your heart. And you, alive for the first time, can live like you were meant to live. Not with selfish idolatry, but as a resurrected child of the Kingdom of God. You couldn’t do it on your own, and you never needed to anyway. Let it go. Cling to Christ. Hold loosely everything that is not Christ. Release it for the sake of your neighbor as we anticipate **the great upside-downing** that is the Kingdom of God. Check your best intentions at the door; stop asking what you need to do and look to Christ who has done everything for you.

* Pastor Dave Lyle - From a sermon preached on Oct. Oct. 10, 2021 at Grace Lutheran Church, Illinois

**From the Irish Jesuits:** It is next to impossible for the rich man to enter the kingdom of God, says Jesus. It would be easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle. (It is said that Jesus was referring to a narrow entrance in the city wall of Jerusalem called the ‘eye of the needle’. In either case, Jesus is indicating something which is extremely difficult, in fact, next to impossible.)

The disciples were quite amazed at Jesus’ words. They were thinking along lines traditional to their culture and their religion. Wealth was a sign of God’s blessings; poverty and sickness a sign of his punishment. But Jesus turns this tradition upside down. It was something the young man could not understand either. He was under the impression that his wealth was a grace, a sign of God’s favour. The idea of giving alms was to be highly commended but to share his wealth with the poor and create a more just playing field seemed to make no sense.

Then Peter, the optimist, begins to see the bright side. “What about us? We have left everything and followed you.” Jesus gives a twofold reply. As the leaders of the new community and people who have generously put their whole security in Jesus, his disciples will be especially rewarded. And indeed everyone who leaves family and goods for Jesus’ sake will be rewarded many times over with father, mother, brothers, sisters, goods. This is not just a pie-in-the-sky promise. It is one that can be realised and, in many parts of the world, it is. When everyone works for the good of the other, everyone benefits. The wealth-is-good world believes that it is every man for himself. There is only a limited amount of the cake and it is up to each one to get as big a piece as he can. Too bad about the losers.

In the world of Jesus, everyone gets because everyone gives; because everyone gives, everyone receives. It is not a ‘gimme’ world; it is a reaching out to others world. And when everyone reaches out, everyone is benefiting. In such a world, I do not have to worry about a roof over my head, or about brothers and sisters, or property or security. It is the realisation of “From each according to his ability; to each according to his need.” It is where love and justice meet. For too many people in our world, there is neither love nor justice. If the rich man had liberated himself from his wealth and shared it with the poor and become a follower of Jesus in the new community, he might never have been rich again but he would have had all his needs attended to. - (www.sacredspace.ie)

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**‘Blessed are the Poor in Spirit…’** We often think of being poor in spirit as the call to material poverty, however, Jesus is also calling us to a deeper poverty of the heart in this preaching. To be poor in spirit means **recognizing that everything good in our nature comes from God.** Anything worthy of praise in us comes from God and God alone.

If not kept in check, wealth and material goods can create attachment, causing us to fall into a mindset of “the more you have, the more you want.'' This is **not** to say that having material goods is bad. It depends on the disposition of your heart. If our material possessions cause us to lose focus on God and our need for him, this is where wealth hinders our spiritual poverty. It is the mindset of self-sufficiency we ought to be weary of.

For example, a person who is not poor in spirit may think: “*I have a great job, a beautiful house, multiple cars, and I take frequent vacations—why would I need God? I am doing just fine on my own!*” When we lose sight of our nothingness, our total dependence on God, and think that our success is fabricated by our own efforts, we fail to recognize God is the giver of all things.

Instead, someone who **is** spiritually poor may think: “*God has blessed me with many wonderful things. Through his grace sustaining me, I am able to provide for my family and enjoy the gifts he has given. I recognize that all of these things are gifts from him and I wish to share them with others.”*

God does not call all of us to sell all our possessions and rid ourselves of everything, but **he does call us to always prioritize him over material things.  -** (By Divine Word Missionaries, October 2022)

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When Jesus said: *‘it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of God’,*it was a hard saying for the disciples to grasp.  Wealth was considered to be a sign of God’s favor.  So if the rich young man could not enter the kingdom, who could? Tradition tells us that the ‘eye of the needle’ was a small, narrow gate into the city of Jerusalem.  In order for camels to make it through, they would have to lower themselves to get through.

They would also have to be rid of any excess baggage that would get in their way.  To the rich young man and the disciples, Jesus was asking them to trust in God, not anything else, for entrance into his kingdom.

We all tend to cling to different types of ‘riches’ that hinder us from receiving God’s life fully.  Material wealth is one example because it could make us rely on something other than God, and can blind us to our need for God.  Other ‘riches’ that may hinder us spiritually may be a bad habit, or a mental attitude, or prejudices against certain people.

In answer to Peter’s question:  “Who then can be saved?” we already know.  God shows no partiality; God offers salvation to everyone. Maybe we can learn something from that camel.  If we want to enter eternal life,

* We need to lower ourselves on our knees in prayer and humility.
* We need to get rid of whatever baggage is hindering our spiritual growth.
* And we need to follow the Master through the gate to the other side with lots of faith and trust.

 - Sr. Rosemary Finnegan, O.P.

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**Ignatian thought -**

**Free at last:** Ignatian spirituality emphasizes interior freedom. To choose rightly, we should strive to be free of personal preferences, superfluous attachments, and pre-formed opinions. Ignatius counseled radical detachment: “We should not fix our desires on health or sickness, wealth or poverty, success or failure, a long life or a short one.” Our one goal is the freedom to make a wholehearted choice to follow God.

* Ignatianspirituality.com – 10 Element of Ignatian Spirituality - (based on the teachings of St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits)

***From Pope Francis:*** *‘Faith and attachment to riches cannot co-exist’*

We deprive ourselves of good, and receive in exchange the joy of the true good; we free ourselves from slavery to things, and we win the liberty of service out of love; we renounce possessing, and we attain the happiness of giving. About which Jesus said, ‘there is more joy in giving than receiving.’

The youth did not allow himself to be conquered by the loving gaze of Jesus and thus he wasn’t able to change. Only in welcoming with humble gratitude the Lord’s love do we free ourselves from the seduction of idols and the blindness of our illusions. Money, pleasure, and success dazzle, but later they disappoint; they promise life, but cause death. The Lord asks of us a detachment from these false riches to enter into true life, a full life that is authentic and luminous. *Pope Francis, Angelus, Oct. 11, 2015*

**In another reflection on this reading, Pope Francis said:** *“The Lord does not know how to give less than everything; when he gives something, he gives himself, which is everything”.  (Feb. 28, 2017)*

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Discussion Questions

Do we truly believe that “all things are possible for God,” as Jesus says here, or do we often have to be reminded of God’s great love, great power, and great desire for our well-being?

Is it hard to realize that what God offers us is enough? That it completely sustains us?

What can we do to increase our trust in God’s complete care for us? (How does the first reading give us some helpful insight here? What “gifts” can we pray for?)

What kind of “dying” do you think Pastor Dave Lyle is talking about in his sermon (when he says “we need to drop dead?”) Talk a little about this, and also his use of the term “the great upside-downing” near the end of his sermon. How do our worldly wants compare with the world that Jesus is showing us?

Why do you think Jesus places such an emphasis on poverty, simplicity and humility?

Discuss the idea of freedom, or spiritual freedom (as mentioned in the paragraph from Ignatianspirituality.com). Why do we tend to think that money and wealth can buy us more freedom? What is Jesus saying about this?

Think for a few minutes about some things that you might be unwilling to give up – the things you put ahead of God. Do some of these things really hold their value? Will they still be necessary, or trendy in a few years?

What are the things that really last?

***Our Weekly Focus Thought (adapted from Pope Francis)***

“To enter into the Kingdom of Heaven we must allow ourselves to be astonished.”

*How was I astonished this week?*

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***Other thoughts for the coming week***

Spend a little time thinking about the way Jesus reacts to the rich man. What (if anything) do you think Jesus saw in the man?

What kind of lesson is here for us? How do you think Jesus looks at you?

You may also want to spend a little time with this prayer. How do you react to this?

**Suscipe Prayer**

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty,
my memory, my understanding,
and my entire will,
All I have and call my own. You have given all to me. To you, Lord, I return it.

Everything is yours; do with it what you will.
Give me only your love and your grace,
that is enough for me. *(St. Ignatius of Loyola – 1491-1556)*

***One other suggestion - related scripture:***

*Not to us, not to us, but to your name give glory because of your mercy and faithfulness. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands. They have mouths but do not speak, eyes but do not see. They have ears but do not hear, noses but do not smell. They have hands but do not feel, feet but do not walk; they produce no sound from their throats. Those who fear the Lord trust in the Lord, who is their help and shield. The Lord remembers us and will bless us, will bless the house of Israel, will bless the house of Aaron, Will bless those who fear the Lord, small and great alike.*

 *Psalm 115: 1, 4-7, 11-13*