

SELL ALL THAT YOU HAVE.....AND COME FOLLOW ME Biblical Comentary by Father Alberto Maggi OSM

Mark 10, 17-30

And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.'" And he said to him, "Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth." And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to him, "Then who can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God." Peter began to say to him, "See, we have left everything and followed you." Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life.

To understand these verses we must let ourselves be guided by the terms used by the evangelist in his narrative to indicate what he wants to express. As in these verses in Mark's gospel chapter 10, 17-30

The evangelist writes "*And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him..* Here are two important elements. Until now, the only one that ran to Jesus was a man possessed with

something stronger than himself that kept him imprisoned and the leper that throw himself on their knees before Jesus an impure person that was thought to be excluded from God.

So the evangelist is saying to us that this person is more possessed than a madman and more impure than a leper. The preoccupation of this person - he is anonymous which signifies a representative character - is what to do to obtain the eternal life.

Well, Jesus replies in a very dry way, because he has come to begin the kingdom of God, an alternative society, he has not come to give indications for eternal life. However, Jesus refers him to God and the commandments and here Jesus eliminates the three that were exclusive to Israel, the most important, the obligations to God and he lists only five commandments that regard the conduct towards others.

For eternal life no matter how and what was believed, what was important was how one loved the others. And Jesus gives him a list. *'Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness,...'* and here Jesus adds *"Do not defraud,.."* which was a rule and not a commandment. Why does Jesus puts it with the commandments, giving more value to the commandment?

It is from the book of Deuteronomy where it was asked not to swindle the workers, the employees. So Jesus insinuates that at the base of all riches - seeing this person is very rich - there is always fraud and swindle. Then *"Honor your father and mother.'*

The man says he has observed all these things from youth. *And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing:.."* I translate the text literally, it is not only one thing you lack, "you have done so much add also this". No. "One you lack" was an expression to indicate, "you lack everything." So much observance of the commandments, so much religious observation, even so it has made you a person - as we have seen - anxious and worried.

So Jesus, who loves him, asks him to be happy making the others happy. And go with Jesus to have more, advice for his spiritual life and Jesus invited him to give more. And says *"...go, sell all that you have and give to the poor,.."* meaning to make happiness to be happy, *"..and you will have treasure in heaven;"* meaning God.

"..and come, follow me." This meeting with Jesus did not turn out well for this individual. So, *"Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful,.."* and the evangelist's conclusion *"... for he had great possessions, "* This is why he had presented this individual that ran to Jesus like a man possessed and fell on his knees as an impure person. He believed to possess his possessions, but in reality, they possessed him. And it is the possession of these goods, the egoism that is born that closes the communication with God

His condition is worse than that of the leper that Jesus purified and even worse than the man possessed that Jesus freed. Therefore, Jesus turns to his disciples and absolutely excludes that in his society a rich man can enter into the kingdom because there is place for only the people but not their riches. What is the difference?

The Lord is he who gives, sharing with the others; the rich man is he that keeps all for himself.

Jesus explains how difficult for those that possess riches to enter into the kingdom of God. This creates astonishment in his disciples. Happy that at last in their group someone well off was to enter, a rich man able to provide substance for this group of disciples that had left everything to follow Jesus, but Jesus lets him go.

And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to him, "Then who can be saved?" It is not the eternal salvation, the word indicates sustainment, survival and escape from danger, meaning, "How are we to go on if you do not want someone with money here with us?"

And Jesus says that it is impossible for man but not for God. Man thinks that security is in accumulation, for Jesus the security, happiness is in sharing with others. The disciple Peter reacts and defiantly says: *"See, we have left everything and followed you."* Here Jesus replies listing seven obstacles that must be eliminated because they obstruct following Jesus and the fullness of happiness. For this he affirms: *"Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel,.."* the minimum renunciation corresponds to the full abundance *".. who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time,.."*

A hundred means the blessing... *"..houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life."* It is eternal life that is inherited; it is not obtained by one's own means, but is a gift on the behalf of God. There is the last verse, that is important but it is not in the liturgic text.

"But many who are first will be last, and the last first." Jesus had met with one that was considered one of the first and he invited him to be the last in that way the last can feel first.