**Mk 10. 17-30**

[At that time] As Jesus was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall 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, I have kept all these things from my youth up." Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, "One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

But at these words he was saddened, and he went away grieving, for he was one who owned much property. And Jesus, looking around, said to His disciples, "How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!" The disciples were amazed at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, "Children, how hard 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 man to enter the kingdom of God." They were even more astonished and said to Him, "Then who can be saved?" Looking at them, Jesus said, "With people it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God."

Peter began to say to Him, "Behold, 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 farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life.

In Mark’s Gospel, every time the evangelist uses the term “journey” (lit. from Greek “way”), is always an indication of an unfruitful sowing. It’s a seed that falls on a soil, but birds come and eat it, a situation that Jesus had explained as Satan who deviates the message. Satan is the image of power, or richness, of all what prevents from welcoming the message of Jesus.
The passage we are analyzing starts with “As Jesus was setting out on a journey”. The evangelist is specifying, then, that sowing will be unfruitful.

“A man”, the evangelist is not saying who he is, “ran up to him and knelt before him”. In this Gospel there are two characters showing those characteristics: one runs up to Jesus, he is the man with an unclean spirit, the one from Gerasenes (Mk 5.6), that is the person trapped by something stronger than himself, a prisoner; and the one who kneels before Jesus is the leper (Mk 1.40), who was considered as excluded from God.

The evangelist means that this character is prisoner of something very strong and feels somehow excluded from God. Well, this anguished man, addresses to Jesus asking him the right way to get the eternal life.

Jesus answers by recalling God’s commandments, but he does not list all of the them – commandments were split in two parts, the first concerning obligations towards God, and those were the ones reserved to Israel, and the other part concerning behavior and obligations towards others, and those were common to all cultures of that time.

Well, Jesus totally eliminates the first part, stating that neither the behavior nor the relationship with God matter, but only the relationship with others. And he only lists five obligations of the second part, plus a precept.

“Do not murder, to not commit adultery, do not steal, do not bear false witness” – bearing false witness is not like telling a lie; it was a lie who caused a person to be sentenced to death, as it happened to Jesus - , and next we find “do not defraud”. It was a precept taken from Deuteronomy, addressed to employers as not to fraud their employees, each day providing them with their due pay.

The evangelist is insinuating that this individual approaching Jesus might be concerned by this issue. And finally “honor your father and mother” – ‘to honor’ refers to providing for their support, as leaving them in poverty was dishonorable. This individual is boasting about having observed all commandments since his youth.

He says “Teacher, I have kept all these things” – Greek language shows exactly how this person is full of himself, by saying tâuta pânta, we just can perceive his boasting – “from my youth up.” “Looking at him” – “to look at” someone means penetrating his true reality – Jesus’ look always conveys life and love – “and said to him” ... Jesus doesn't really say, as often translators translate “only one thing is missing”, as just a little more thing is missing, but the right translation is “One you lack”. In that culture “One” meant everything; therefore Jesus is stating “you have nothing”.

Why “has he nothing”? For, as we will see in this narrative, he was rich. Jesus says “all you possess give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven”, because God will be your safeness.

This individual approaches Jesus in order to get something more, and Jesus requires him to give something more.
“And come, follow me. But at these words he was saddened, and he went away grieving, for he was one who owned much property”. That’s why the evangelist introduced this individual as the one who runs, as the one with an unclean spirit. He is possessed. He thought he owned properties, but he is “owned” by his properties.

Gospels make clear that one only owns what he gives. The goods we hold for ourselves are not owned by us, but own us. Meeting Jesus for this man was not of his great relief: at first he was prisoner, after he was saddened.

The passage goes on with the reply of disciples, who seem to become alarmed, for a rich that has to leave his richness in order to enter His community (the Kingdom of God), will not be able to earn his living. Well Jesus is drastic. In His community there’s no place for wealthy, but only for lords. A rich the one who owns, a lord in the one who gives and any one on earth is able to.

Gospel of this Sunday is as rich as to require his splitting in two parts. Let’s see the second one, the reaction of disciples facing Jesus’ drastic response. They feel amazed about Jesus asking the rich to leave his property in order to enter His community (the Kingdom).

By seeing this Jesus addresses to them and states that – for rich obviously – “it will be hard to enter the Kingdom of God”, for disciples, by having welcomed his message, already entered the Kingdom. Jesus is specifying it is hard for those who are wealthy. Why?

The Kingdom of God is open for lords, not for rich. A lord is the one who gives, a rich is the one who holds for himself. Jesus provides, on this subject, the famous example of the camel and the eye of the needle, in order to express how it is impossible for a rich to enter Jesus’ community, for it is a place of generosity.

Facing his prompt and drastic reply, disciples are much more worried and were asking themselves “Then who can be saved?” They’re not meaning the eternal salvation, for we have already seen that if the rich behaves honestly and observes commandments – not all of them, but the ones relating to the neighbor – he gets the eternal life.

The Greek verb “to save” means “to support, to avoid a danger”. The reasoning of disciples is: if a rich, by entering the group was asked to leave his property, how can the community earn its living? This is the issue that disciples are raising.

“Looking at them, Jesus said, ‘With people it is impossible, but not with God’ “. Men believe that happiness is owning always something more, but Jesus, God himself, teaches that happiness and life can be true only by giving, not by possessing. The more we give, the more God provides us with a greater ability to give to others.

Here comes the response of one of disciples who is introduced through his negative nickname; Simon, called Peter … When this nickname is used it means he is opposing Jesus. As a matter of fact he disputes “Behold, we have left everything” – and this is not completely true, as we will see – “and followed you”.

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There’s a problem: Peter is following Jesus, but not in a real sense of truly going with him, for he didn’t accept his ideals. Well, here comes Jesus’ reply “Truly” – which means it is a solemn statement that goes beyond Peters’ reply but concerns believers of all times – “There is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms”, there’s no conjunction and ..., and ..., and ...

Jesus is not requiring to leave everything, but to leave all what prevents men from achieving a complete freedom. If the problem is your house – house means the family heritage – or brothers, or sisters, or father, or mother, or whatever it might be … leave it, abandon it, for it prevents you from reaching your fullness of life.

This forsake must be made for Jesus’ sake and for Gospel’s sake, this is the greatest problem for Simon. He follows Jesus without having understood the Good News that he is announcing, the universal love to be addressed to anyone. Well Jesus guarantees “but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age” – hundred times indicates a blessing on behalf of God and, while one leaves either the house or sisters or brothers (alternately), blessing is overall, “hundred times” – “houses”, and here comes the conjunction “and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms”.

There’s something missing here. Among elements that must be abandoned we also find “father”, but it disappears in the second part, as he represents the authority, the one who rules, for in a Christian community there’s no need of a father, other than the Father in heaven. And the Father of heaven doesn’t rule on men promulgating laws that they must observe, but inwardly giving them his Spirit.

“Along with persecutions”. Together with all blessings come persecutions, but Jesus adds “and eternal life”. That is, persecutions which might occur, cannot prevent from reaching fullness of life, a life of such a quality as to become eternal.