

October 10, 2021

Wis 7:7-11; Heb 4:12-13; Mk 10:17-30 (17-27, Short)

What must I do to inherit eternal life? Pretty direct question that they young man asks Jesus today. Maybe we could as a few more questions. First “What is Eternal Life”?, second “Why should you be concerned about inheriting eternal life”?, and finally “What does Jesus actually say on this topic”?

So what is eternal life? We have known for some time that the human soul continued to exist after the death of the body. This is something that was revealed by God in the ancient prophets and is recorded for us in many ways in the Old Testament. Ancient philosophers (who were not Jewish, or Christian) gave convincing arguments for humans as made up of body and soul - and also compelling arguments of why the soul of humans does not cease to exist after death of the body. Jesus teaches about the afterlife all over the place, and specifically discusses the state of people after death. So what is it? Existing after your body dies must be something very different that we know now. Space, time, sensation, emotions, and even what it means to be alive or dean take on new meanings. We are made of a union of happiness with God, and without that union we would be in a state of eternal death (kind of like an electrical appliance that is designed to work plugged in that is not plugged in) eternally waiting for that thing that makes us come to life. Connection to God provides us all that we need to satisfy us in that state, and all that we need to be fully completed - with that union alone we have eternal life.

So why should we be concerned with gaining eternal life? We cannot conceive what eternity is like; we cannot imagine what it is like to exist without the familiar sensations our body provides. To be in a state of unfulfillment in that eternity would be like being in a coma-like state aware of what we don't have, and unable to satisfy ourselves - forever. The soul which is built for being united to God is disconnected from what makes it whole, it is without the energy to be alive. That would be an existence that we call Hell. Jesus does not want that for us.

He and other Scriptural witnesses, and the whole of the Christian Tradition speak of the state of eternal happiness which we call Heaven, the kingdom where Jesus has prepared a place of us. There we would be so utterly fulfilled by being completed, so eternally nourished and loved that we are in a state of perpetual contentment like we have never felt in this life. So back to the question *What must I do to inherit eternal life?* The asking of the question shows his

understanding that this inheritance is not guaranteed. Jesus has bought us a ticket to the train, but we have to get to the train station. Jesus answers this question about what must be done in many places. In John chapter 3 he says: *Truly, truly, I say to you, unless someone is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.* In John Chapter 6 he says: *Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.* Paul says in Roman 10: *if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.* This faith is essential, but it is more than just believing and saying things because Jesus says in Matthew 7: *Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.* Perhaps the best summary of all of this is what Jesus says to the young man *Come follow me.*

But there are many distractions to following Jesus that can get us off track. Jesus talks today especially about money (and all the things that go along with gathering, worrying about, and using money) as a potential problem. He uses a powerful image of a camel fitting through the eye of a needle. It shows just how our desires for wealth can narrow the passage to heaven. It is easy to follow a simple and quick philosophy - that s not what Jesus says. It is easy to try to maximize pleasure, comfort, and security in this world and not look ahead to the next. Our practice of the faith helps to align us to God's will, it helps to provide us with the union to the Body of Jesus that is required, it gives us the Eucharist as our daily bread as we try to follow Jesus. The key is to not try so hard to take care of ourselves in this life that we fail to follow Jesus and miss out on God taking care of us for eternity in the next life. The ticket is waiting at the station, we just need to get there - and Jesus shows the way.

Come follow me is to believe in faith and refuse to let the false teachings in the world get us off track; *Come follow me* is to follow Jesus in his loyalty and fidelity to the Father; *Come follow me* is to care for and love others as Jesus did; *Come follow me* is to walk the path to a heavenly inheritance, not being held back by the allurements of the material world; *Come follow me* is to enter into the body of Christ through the sacraments and staying united to it; *Come follow me* means to refrain from sin so to be able to be in that body in which no sin can reside. It is in this body we enter heaven with Jesus and share in his inheritance of heaven - this is what it means to inherit eternal life.