

“Help wanted.” All over town, there are signs in businesses that are short of workers. I went to the bank, and they wanted to hire tellers. I went to the grocery store, and they were trying to hire clerks. No matter the business, each seems to have a sign in the window, “Help Wanted.”

Many have increased their minimum starting wage to attract more workers. And this is just not a local issue. Business after business seems to be asking the same question, “Good grief, what must I do to hire a worker?” Money alone is not the answer.

Jesus is always looking for help but he has trouble finding disciples. Jesus told one potential worker in the vineyard, “Follow me.” But the person replied, “I will follow you, Lord, but first let me say farewell to my family at home.” To him Jesus said, “No one who sets a hand to the plow and looks to what was left behind is fit for the kingdom of God” (Lk 9:61-62).

Today’s gospel presents another person hesitant to follow Jesus. “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” (Mk 10:17). The stakes here are much higher than a temporary job. “Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake; some to everlasting life, others to reproach and everlasting disgrace” (Dn 12:2).

Each human life is finite. But our souls are everlasting. With his “Help Wanted” sign, Jesus wants to hire everyone. He wants to welcome every soul to eternal life. Are you willing to follow Jesus? Are you willing to pay the price?

The rich man who approaches Jesus has a good work history. He has been following all the commandments. But money becomes an obstacle, he would rather hold on to it than follow Jesus. Is Jesus unrealistic? Is he asking too much when he says: “Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me” (Mk 10:21).

- Later in the Gospel, Jesus praises a widow who put two small coins into the treasury. “Calling his disciples to himself, he said to them, “Amen, I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the other contributors to the treasury. For they have all contributed from their surplus wealth, but she, from her poverty, has contributed all she had, her whole livelihood” (Mk 12:43-44).<sup>i</sup>
- And at the beginning of the passion when Jesus was in Bethany reclining at table, a woman anoints Jesus’s feet with costly ointment worth more than 300 days wages. Jesus acknowledges her lavish generosity: “She has done a good thing for me ... She has anticipated anointing my body for burial” (Mk 14: 6,8).<sup>ii</sup>

Are you willing to follow Jesus? Are you willing to pay the price? Jesus is always looking for help but his call to holiness demands a total commitment. Jesus was totally committed. He offered his life on the cross for our salvation. He gave everything he had to poor humanity that we might share in the riches of heaven. “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and that of the Gospel will save it. What profit is there for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?” (Mk 8:34-36).

“Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” The rich man in today’s gospel went away sad. What do you hold on to? What holds you back from inheriting eternal life? If it is not wealth, it may be something else.

Jesus asks us to be merciful and offer others forgiveness as we have been forgiven by God. The brother of the prodigal son kept all the commandments. He was a faithful son who never did anything wrong, and yet he held on to his bitterness. He would not forgive.

Jesus begs us to confess our sins and yet we may wish to hold on to them and not let go. Saint Francis of Assisi was once a rich young man who enjoyed a carefree life. He confessed, “When I was in sin, the sight of lepers nauseated me beyond measure.”<sup>iii</sup> One might liken Francis’s attachment to sin ... as his own leprosy.

- When Francis let go of his sins, the Lord helped him to see far, far beyond his own nauseating fears. With new vision and a new heart, Francis met a man afflicted with leprosy near Assisi. Even though his fears persisted, “Francis got off his horse and kissed the leper. Then the leper put out his hand, hoping to receive something. Out of compassion, Francis gave money to the leper. But when Francis mounted his horse again and looked all around, he could see no one. It dawned on him that it was Jesus whom he had just kissed.”<sup>iv</sup>
- Stripped of his pride, stripped of his sins, Francis was ready to follow Jesus anywhere. He wholeheartedly embraced ministry to lepers and treated them as beloved brothers. He often went to the leper colony below Assisi and fed and cared for them. He taught his friars to do the same ... to minister to the lepers, feeding them, while also caring for and kissing their wounds.<sup>v</sup>

“All things are possible for God” (Mk 10:27). Are you ready to give up everything and follow him? “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 ... and eternal life in the age to come” (10:29-30).

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<sup>i</sup> LaVerdiere, Eugene. The Beginning of the Gospel of Mark, Vol 2. Pg 97.

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>iii</sup> [franciscanmedia.org/comment/2552](http://franciscanmedia.org/comment/2552)

<sup>iv</sup> Ibid.

<sup>v</sup> Ibid.