

Besides being a very interesting story,  
this Sunday's Gospel account gives us a rich spiritual word.  
To put it simply,  
God is worth more than anything else in our lives.  
Our story is about a rich young man.  
Whoever he was, "he had many possessions."  
Yet he does seem to have had a good heart, some humility,  
and a positive opinion about Jesus.

**Jesus is not just announcing truths to someone or other,  
he's carefully building faith in someone he loves.**

Without warning  
he literally runs up to Jesus,  
kneels down before him,  
and asks the question,  
"Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"  
This young man must've impressed Jesus.  
Yet he gives the man a seemingly incongruous reply.  
"Why do you call ME good?  
No one's good but God alone."

How in the world does this answer fit the question?  
Since Jesus already saw the seeds of faith in this man,  
he was trying to grow that faith.  
Here's the logic of Jesus' response:

1. only God is (fully) good.
2. yet you have called ME good.
3. Maybe you are sensing the God in me.

We're not told of the response by the young man,  
but we see Jesus going on to take him through the essentials.  
Look, Jesus says,  
you know about the commandments, don't you,  
and he names 6 of them.  
He expects that the man will say yes,  
at which point he can lead him further in the love of God.  
The man gives a wonderful answer:  
"teacher, all of these I have observed from my youth."  
We know that Jesus' heart accepts this answer because of the next line:  
Jesus, looking at him, loved him.

Keep in mind that Mark's account is the tersest of the 4 Gospels, so this startling sentence reveals much about the scene.

**Jesus is not just announcing truths to just anyone, he's carefully nurturing faith in someone he loves.**

So he tells the rich young man, with care, what the next step is. You're lacking in 1 thing.

Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven;

THEN come, follow me.

But, like you and me, the rich young man's not ready to go so far.

“At that statement his face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions.”

The rich man wants to have it both ways:

he wants his possessions AND he wants everlasting life.

Jesus shatters this illusion;

you can't have both, Jesus says.

Jesus comments on the difficulty of being rich & entering the kingdom.

There's more to this story than renunciation of material possessions here, for Jesus does not tell the man simply to get rid of his possessions:

he must sell them

and give to the poor.

The point of Jesus' teaching

is the acknowledgment of the priority of people and THEIR needs

OVER the satisfaction provided by the ownership of things.

THIS is “God's word that is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword,”

and THIS is the spirit of Wisdom of which the First Reading speaks.

We are to value each other as if we were prime possessions,

and the promise of everlasting life

is made to those who have the power to give all they have

to their brothers and sisters,

especially those most in need.

Then who can be saved?

Those whose love for God

expresses itself in eagerness to do good

for others.