



28<sup>th</sup> Sunday Ordinary Time Biv  
Excerpts From Wisdom 7, Hebrews 4 & Mark 10

## Poverty

We will not want to follow Jesus, unless we first discover a poverty within ourselves.  
Fr David King – 10<sup>th</sup> October 2021

*Please look at the Gospel before reading this (Mark 10.17-30)*

### 1. John

It's interesting isn't it, that sometimes suffering and trials turns us away from God, it can be a real test, because we think that he has abandoned us, that he doesn't care. But equally, sometimes, going through a lot in life opens us up to God, because we realise that we can't rely on anything or anyone else, that we need him, and what he's got to offer us, like we've never needed it before.

I rarely use big conversion stories in homilies, because, well it can be a bit clichéd, and for most of us, life is just not like that. But I think this one will do to start on today, because it is a perfect example of someone who, upon hitting rock bottom, threw themselves on God, *because there was no other option*. And that is very connected to what today is all about.

- This story is about John Pridmore who I'm sure I've told you about before. I had the privilege of hearing him speak once, the room was packed, and yet you could have heard a pin drop for the entire time he was telling his story. John had a rough start in life and by the time he was into his teens, stealing and fighting on the streets was a way of life for him. At 15 years old he had his first spell in detention centre, which was supposed to help, but only served to make him more and more angry with everyone and everything.
- Later, in the 80's, through the contacts he met when he was working as a bouncer, he was right at the heart of organised crime in London. The funny thing is that John looks exactly like a gangster, he's absolutely massive, built like an ox, and you can absolutely see him being the 'muscle' for an east end gang. During this time, the cash was flowing, he had a penthouse suite in St John's Wood, a flashy BMW, drugs and women were on tap. But of course this wasn't satisfying him at all. He said that he just felt totally sick inside most of the time, but this went on for years...
- ...until one night he was sent to do a job, to rough someone up, and he ended up hitting this guy with some knuckledusters rather harder than he intended to. The guy fell back and cracked his head on the pavement and there was blood everywhere. John thought that he had killed the guy, he got scared and ran. That night changed everything. He'd hit rock bottom, he'd murdered someone, and he knew he had to change. So he cried out to God, and said the first prayer of his life asking to be rescued. 'Up to now all I have done is taken from you God, now I want to give' he said.
- As he said that prayer he said that the emptiness within his heart, which none of this stuff was able to satisfy, was filled with the love of God. John's life completely changed in that moment. He went to find a priest, went back to church, and soon was living a completely different life and within a few years was devoted to serving God in the work of Evangelisation. Today John goes all around the world telling young people about his story. He is an international speaker, and I don't think I have ever met anyone so in love with Jesus as John was when I met him, and please God, still is.

## 2. Mark

- Now, that's just a snap shot of his incredible story, I can't possibly do it justice here, you'll have to read his book, or listen to him on youtube, but the point is that if we have everything we need, and if everything is fine, well...we have no need of God.
- If we're fed and watered and clothed, well then, why would we need God? It's often the people who have illness in their life that they cannot do a thing about, or people who have been bereaved and know the loss of that, who are poor and struggling to put food on the table, who are outcast and rejected, who have been lured into a life of addiction or crime, who know their need of God.
  - They are the ones who know their need of healing, their need of God's love, his consolation, his forgiveness, his hope. They are the ones that need what he has to give! Jesus found these people a lot more open to his message two thousand years ago, and you know what, it has remained thus ever since (maybe it's no co-incidence that the wealthier and wealthier we have all got in the west, the less and less interested we have become in Jesus).
- So yes, these people have found a poverty within themselves, that is, they have found a need of something he has to offer, his love, his forgiveness, his consolation, his hope!
- And that's exactly what the Gospel is all about. 'Go' Jesus says to the man 'Go and discover your poverty, discover that your wealth is useless and you cannot take a penny of it with you, and when you have found it, come back, because then you'll be ready to follow me'. This reading is not about riches per se. It's about finding, whether you have riches or not (though it is harder if you do) your need of God.

## 3. David

- And that's the challenge for today. By and large, we live in a part of the world, where we have everything we need. But you see, the truth of it is, we *all* need God, there is a poverty in each one of us, it's just about whether or not we are able to admit it is there, or see it is there.
- But one way or another, that poverty will come to the fore in our lives. One day I will die. One day, those I love will die, one day all my wealth will suddenly fall into relief and I will realise it all means nothing and has only served to distract me from what life is really all about.
- There is a beautiful word that can point us in the right direction here, to discovering our poverty, and that word is 'vulnerability'. If you think about it, we enter and leave this world in complete and utter vulnerability. The bit in the middle is just an illusion, and a fleeting one at that, our true state is vulnerability. The only choice we have as we mature, is how we inhabit our vulnerability.
  - Are we going to recognise it is there? Are we going to realise that our health and wealth is fleeting and fragile and will only last so long? And discovering that, are we going to allow that to thrust us onto Jesus, recognising we need what he has to offer us?
- Or are we going to dig our heels in and desperately pretend that life will be ok for ever, that we will never have any need of God. That game may last a few years, but it wont last a lifetime. Go, discover your poverty says Jesus to us today, discover your need of me, then come, and follow me.

*Jesus, help me to see where it is in my life that I need you. Then give me the courage to follow you with all my heart*