

Our Father (John Nisi) (76)
Ask & you will receive (Henderson)
Happy Christmas (Henderson)
TAPE (Doris R.H.K.)

Mk 10¹⁷⁻²⁷ (Advent 326)

Midday Prayer - 230
8.10.70
9.10.72
11.10.73
10.10.74
14.10.76

That passage of St Mark's gospel, with its stark, arresting picture of impossibility, is perhaps familiar enough to you — maybe so familiar that like a lot of other things in the Bible, it doesn't usually strike home with the same force it evidently had for our Lord's immediate listeners. "The disciples were astounded by these words." "They were more astonished than ever." The story is so familiar that its point and its message need meditating on, and prayer. True, in the context in which St Mark recounts what Jesus had to say about the difficulty or impossibility of a rich man entering the kingdom, he is evidently talking about what we commonly think of as wealth — a rich young man who didn't face the demand of Christ that he sell everything he owned & give the money to the poor. But money isn't the only wealth that prevents a man from entering God's kingdom; nor is the mere possession of wealth what causes the impossibility. The early Church in Jerusalem soon found itself in an acute crisis, in which it had to appeal to other churches for financial assistance, when it tried to live a whole communitarian life of literal application of Christ's counsels. Through the ages, various groups of dedicated Christians have all tried to follow as closely as possible and with as generous self-giving as possible the ideal of evangelical poverty — and each of those groups has had to have its own practical arrangements for simple living and survival, all of them differing in one way or another. Individual Christians, too, there have always been who have given outstanding witness to the seriousness with which they took the words of the gospel, and have given themselves totally to the love and service of others, especially the economically poor. But the gospel of Christ is

not an economic or political blueprint for the running of human society and affairs — we've got to use intelligence to make human laws and arrangements that will protect human dignity and personal rights, allow people to live freely in accordance with their conscience and in obedience to God, and ensure that justice and respect for all men is observed. That this is almost an impossible task, given the ^{greed, the} weakness, jealousy & pride of men, is only all too evident from the history of civilisation and the world we live in, with all its competing theories and their varying applications: there's always the temptation to settle for the attractiveness of the simple solution, with all its horrible repression and more hidden injustice. The distribution of the world's wealth is one of the big questions of the day. Put side by side with the gospel teaching in that passage we began with, you may notice there's no real parallel first of all, and then that it's not wealth itself that is the problem — for God's creation, with all its richness and variety, and the opportunities and potential it offers intelligent man, is good. Our Lord spoke to a young man, to a person; and He speaks the same message to each of us as people, not to an anonymous mass or an ^{economic} theory or a political party. It's not whether you have a lot of money or not that matters for the kingdom of God — some of Jesus' friends were wealthy enough — but what your attitude is to God and His place in yr. life. "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" was the young man's question — There is one thing you lack, Jesus told him; one thing he did not do, was not prepared to do. For at least, despite all the things he did, he was not open to receive, did not realise that eternal life can only be a gift, not sth. bought or bargained for by wealth or any reliance on anything that is not God Himself.

and keeps with St Francis of Assisi too,
 'Good Lady Pouches', a song by
 Sold for the Sun [Accl. Aug 2^d]

Think about it while we listen to a prayer in music for today, (Come Love Caroling
 by Douglas of God [Litt. L. 2])

MUSIC - PRAYERS

From the Bk of Wisdom, this short piece may help as a reflection on what we've heard from St Mark's gospel, another point of view, if you like: WIS. 7⁷⁻¹¹ (Advent 326)

This wisdom and understanding are a figure of the person of Christ himself — they are also numbered among the gifts given to man by the presence and work of the Holy Spirit sent to us by Christ. They are the wisdom & understanding of God himself, nothing less. What is wealth or anything else beside the gift of God's love offered by Christ? We have to make that choice, to rely on, hold on to something of our own (however small or silly, big or important in our eyes it may seem), or to accept that only God can save us, and to give ourselves totally into His hands. For a person who has wealth & importance, a place in the world, something he has won for himself by his own effort and energy, it's an extremely difficult choice to make, but a vital one. Let us pray for God's wisdom & understanding — and not forget in our prayer, either, the men whose leadership & intelligence in running the economic & political affairs of society have so much to do with the way we prize what is of value.