

Sermon for Sunday 10th October 2021 (Harvest & Trinity 19) 'What do you truly value?'
from Fr. Mike.

- **Job.23.1-9,16-17; Hebrews 4.12-16; Mark 10.17-31**

Those of you who were forced to read Shakespeare at school might remember how being forced to engage often made the whole process a chore, especially if the text chosen by the teacher was apparently a 'comedy.' We know it's a comedy because the esteemed bard put 'a joke' in it! However, there are always hidden depths if anyone cares to look more closely. Today's Gospel shows Jesus revealing a sense of humour (his image of attempting to thread camels through the eye of a needle v.25) to illustrate more serious points.

This anti-materialistic message from Mark contrasts quite starkly with the consumer-driven society we live in today. Jesus elaborates that following the Ten Commandments is not enough to truly be one with God and enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Rather, only by giving up our material possessions will the holy gates be opened for us. This request can seem impossible to achieve, but as with many of Jesus' teachings, it challenges us to look deep inside ourselves and uncover what is truly most important in our lives. What do you truly value?

Jesus implies that the rich and poor are distinguished by what they choose to value.

A rich man's primary concern is to make himself look better compared to everyone else, and society convinces him to demonstrate his worth by buying the fanciest cars and the biggest houses, so to speak; however, that rich man will never *fully* appreciate the gravity of his purchases, as his abundance of wealth allows him to take his comfortable life for granted. Meanwhile, a poor man owns next to nothing, but he places a far greater worth on every item he *does* possess. More subtle perhaps, is

that without the distracting abundance of physical objects, a 'poor' person can **prioritise their relationship with God** above all else and turn their attention to taking care of loved ones. At its most obvious level, this Gospel can teach us that by separating ourselves from our physical belongings, we are freed of the notion that material objects will make us happy, and in doing so, we open ourselves to God and remember to care for those most in need of our love.

Jesus' message is clearly not just about stifling our obsession with buying more things; it also indicates a shift in *how we should assign value to what we already have...* This Sunday we celebrate 'Harvest.' As most in our parish do not live an agricultural life, we need to find a legitimate way of giving thanks for those who do, and then find an equally legitimate means of adding lasting value to our city or the wider world.

We often learn more from our losses than our wins.

Here is an interesting take on 'Harvest'. Last month I buried young Joe (only 33yrs), a serving Diver in the Royal Navy. He valued his body both in life and death; giving permission for his organs to be 'harvested' if they would help others. Organ donation saves and transforms the lives of others – **if** we have the foresight to make that generous call *voluntarily* and while we are alive. Consequently, at this very moment there is a lady in her 60's together with a man in his 30's who now have a good kidney, simply because of Joe. There is also a schoolgirl with a new liver, and possibly the most significant of all, a young man in his 20's who literally enjoys a new heart! The gift of Joe's 'harvested' vital organs illustrates that life, legacy and love continues by simply changing its form. Worth a thought?

Fr. Mike (Sunday 10th October 2021)