

“What is the Holy Spirit gently whispering to us?”



“The rich young man is bristling with confidence initially and yet leaves the discussion consumed with sorrow...The underlying verb I discovered extends even to grieving...You see, he is on the receiving end of a sharp reality check. He approaches Jesus with the confidence of someone used to control, resolution and achievement,” says Bishop Peter Grice

Excitement is building for the [Provincial Clergy Conference](#), which will be held between Monday 19 and Thursday 22 August on the Gold Coast. This is the first “gathering of the clan” for the Province of Queensland post-Covid. It will be wonderful to celebrate the Eucharist with such a diverse group of clergy at the conference. I took the liberty of checking the Gospel reading for the opening Eucharist. This is certainly advanced preparation for me, please understand! It is [Matthew 19.16-22](#), depicting the poignant interaction between an impressive young man and our Lord. The rich young man is bristling with confidence initially and yet leaves the discussion consumed with sorrow...The underlying verb I discovered extends even to *grieving*. It is a powerful statement of emotion. Not a happy outcome.

You see, he is on the receiving end of a sharp reality check. He approaches Jesus with the confidence of someone used to control, resolution and achievement. He presupposes that even eternity is within the scope of his sphere of influence. Of course, Jesus, the consummate communicator temporarily enters this frame of reference and reels off the implied qualifying requirements for eternity. His response is predicated on the ability to keep the commandments. The order is intriguing. Commandment six, no murder; seven, no adultery; eight, no theft; and nine, veracity, no lying. So far so good.

The next brace is a bit more pointed, to do with motivation, the obedience of the heart. Honour, a bit more amorphous and the *obiter* [Leviticus 19.18](#), the golden rule. These “heart” commands are harder to quantify. Nevertheless, our impressive young man confidently affirms his compliance. Not noted in our narrative, but surely there was a collective audible gasp of admiration and disbelief from those within earshot. Raise the bar, Jesus!

And so, he does. The next stipulation from Jesus exposes the heart of the matter. There is no acknowledgement by the rich young man of the missing commandments, one to four, involving orientation to and worship of God; neither the omitted tenth, no coveting of those around you. These were evidently where the rich young man was lacking. Perhaps bluntly, material possessions were his “god”, his object of worship and the compass by which he related to others. We are invited to ponder these conclusions.

Likewise, we are left to ponder the exact cause of his lament. His standing seems to hold no sway in the kingdom of heaven, much to the later chagrin of the disciples. The call to follow rather than lead is counter cultural. Perhaps the disciples need to heed the cultural inversion demonstrated by Jesus immediately prior in an object lesson of kingdom values, the children, the powerless, the status innocent. Perhaps they eventually recalled the first Beatitude, calling for spiritual poverty rather than pride being the pre-requisite for the ethics of eternity. Not really what they expected. Certainly not what the world promotes as values.

As we reflect on our faith walk and ministry, it is worth considering, what is the Holy Spirit gently whispering to us? Not a bad opening devotion for our next finance and property sub-committee meeting! A longer discussion than is possible here for sure.

Every blessing until we gather at Surfers for our conference,

+Peter

Editor’s note: Registrations for the Provincial Clergy Conference 2024 close on Monday 15 July 2024. Hear Bishop Peter Grice preach at the conference and gather with other clergy from across our Province on the Gold Coast between Monday 19 to Thursday 22 August. The theme of Provincial Clergy Conference 2024 is “Common Purpose, Shared Joy”. Participants will reflect on what it might mean to be the Church together in this season and how and where we might know joy as we journey together. There will be a variety of workshops and plenty of worship and fellowship. Visit the [conference website](#) for more information.