

The readings for today impress upon us the need for us to see our riches not in monetary terms or in the wealth of possessions, but in the fact that we belong to Christ, the wisdom of God.

The first reading is a beautiful description of the spirit of Wisdom.

*“I prayed, and understanding was given me;  
I entreated, and the spirit of Wisdom came to me.....  
Compared with her, I held riches as nothing.....  
I loved her more than health or beauty,  
Preferred her to the light,  
Since her radiance never sleeps.”*

This theme continues in the Gospel reading when Jesus tells the man who has kept all the commandments from his youth that there is one more thing that he can do to inherit eternal life:

*“Go and sell everything you own and give the money to the poor.”*

The man is saddened by this response, because he possessed great wealth. Jesus then said,

*“It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”*

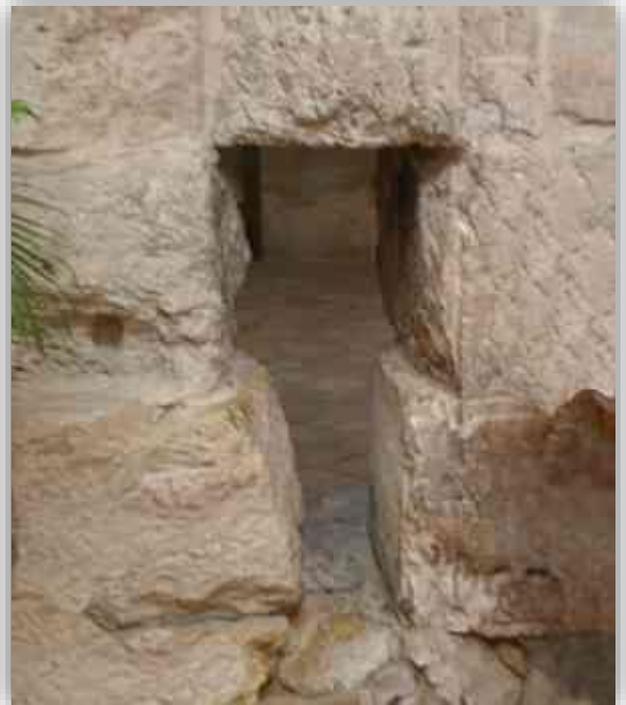
These words attributed to Jesus have been a source of great debate over the centuries.

Some people believe that there were “eye of the needle” gates in Jerusalem at that time. These could allow people to pass through, but not camels.

Cyril of Alexandria claimed that “camel” is a Greek misspelling and that *kamêlos* (κάμηλος, camel) was written in place of *kamilos* (κάμιλος, meaning "rope" or "cable")

Others have translated this as "It is easier for an anchor cable to go through an eye of a needle than for a rich person to come to God's kingdom.

Whatever the truth is about the camel or the eye of the needle, one thing is certain – Jesus is telling us that storing up riches and wealth in this world is not the way to the kingdom of heaven.



The eye of the needle Jerusalem

So what does this mean for people who are not considered rich, but who have more than they need to be comfortable? Jesus is not asking us to make ourselves poor, by selling all we own. Those who

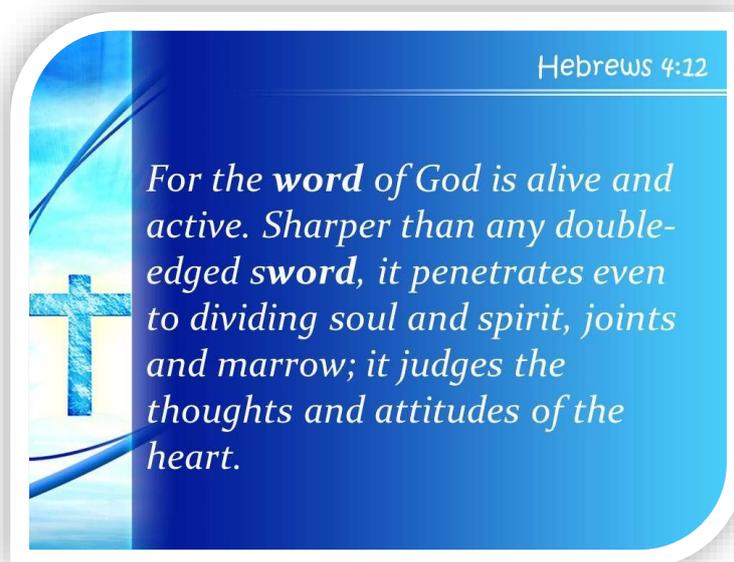
have taken a vow of poverty do not own anything. Instead, Jesus is asking us to be mindful of those less fortunate than ourselves and to give what we can to them.

We need to do this as individuals but also as a society. So many families have been helped in recent months by the free lunches provided to children by the campaign led by Marcus Rashford; by food banks; by the £20 increase in Universal Credit. Is this support about to change? Will we allow leaders who have never known what it is like to go hungry, who have never had to worry about how to pay the rent or the electricity, to let children return to poverty and hunger?



This is what the word of God asks of us as we read in today's second reading to the Hebrews:

*"The word of God is something alive and active: it cuts like any double-edged sword but more finely..... it can judge the secret emotions and thoughts....everything is uncovered and open to the eyes of the one to whom we must give account of ourselves."*



Let us pray....

For the spirit of Wisdom

For the ability to have hearts as wide as the world

For the openness to be attentive to the word of God

That our love be real and active and not just mere talk.