

The Keys to the Kingdom



They had worked together for some time and Jesus and Luke had lengthy conversations. As was the custom with such discussions, references were made to the Ancient Scriptures. In the Book of Deuteronomy, Moses descended from the mountain, addressed the people who were assembled in the plain (Dt 1:4), and delivered the stone tablets. This was the Law that God had given to his people and if they followed it, they would reach the Promised Land.

Similarly, Jesus descended from the mountain to address the crowds who waited for him on the plain. They were Jews and pagans, men and women, wealthy and poor, healthy and infirm. Like Moses, Jesus gave them the Keys to God's Kingdom - a new land without war or famine and where peace and harmony reigned. It was not a far-away land. It was their world - but renewed and transformed.

CHANGING THE WORLD

Many analysts have confirmed that two vices - greed and fear - are at the root of the current economic crisis. These lead us to accumulate profits, not out of necessity but to quench our thirst for wealth, and to make market decisions that are motivated by fear rather than reason. All the international agreements will not shelter us from another crisis so long as people are not willing to experience a radical change in attitude.

At the beginning of his mission, Jesus did not propose a behavioral change, but a change in attitude. Without it, it would be impossible to follow the Commandments or enter the Promised Land. This attitude can be summarized by two words: confidence and detachment. This radical change will enable us to respect the people of our world and use our environmental resources carefully rather than depleting them for short-term gain. This attitude will encourage us to use our wealth to serve humanity's needs instead of stoking our never-ending need to consume.

Yet when Jesus proclaimed: *Blessed are the poor*, he was not glorifying misery. St. Luke gave us a description of the first Christian community: *there was not a needy person among them*. Why was this? *Because everything they owned was held in common* (Ac 4:32-35).

In the same way, when Jesus declared: *Unhappy are the rich*, he was not condemning the wealthy. The expression *unhappy* is a translation of the Greek word *ouai* or the English, *woe*. We would say *Poor them!* Jesus used this also to describe the distress felt by people during the fall of Jerusalem but not to indicate that they would be rejected. *Yes, Jesus said to us, unhappy are those whose hearts are prisoners of wealth; they allow themselves to be guided by fear and greed; they do not live but merely exist in a world of war and cynicism.*

Send these Valentine wishes to all the *Wall Street* mavericks you know:

A heart that has chosen Christ's *presence* as its treasure rather than *abundance* and that has chosen *confidence* in his Commandments rather than *mistrust* will possess the Keys to the Promised Land.

Georges Madore, s.m.m.

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