

Homily based on the readings from August 19, 2025 (Judges 6.11-24a; Matthew 19.23-30)

Whenever a person applies for a job, whether it is waiting tables or teaching school or overseeing a multinational corporation, the hiring process is devoted to answering one basic question: does this individual possess the necessary background and abilities? The objective, at least in principle, is to make sure no one ever receives a position for which he is unqualified. Although this procedure is perfectly reasonable, it is important to recognize that *God* selects the men and women who labor on *his* behalf in a *totally* different manner.

We do not know much about the professional backgrounds of the original twelve apostles, other than that four of them were fishermen and one was a tax collector. As far as we can tell, none of them had any specialized theological training or possessed any concrete skills that would be useful in establishing a worldwide religious organization. Nevertheless, God chose these flawed and imperfect individuals to be

the instruments of his own design. As the saying goes: “God does not choose the qualified; he qualifies the chosen.” Even though the Church has benefitted over the years from many wise, learned, and talented individuals, the Church has never depended on their wisdom, their learning, or their talents. There is one and only one source of the Church’s strength, and that is Jesus Christ himself.

Today’s first reading illustrates exactly this type of situation – centuries, in fact, before the establishment of the Church. By his own account, Gideon is the “most insignificant” member of “the lowliest [family] in Manasseh.” Nevertheless, God specifically chooses *him* to serve as the instrument of Israel’s salvation. These circumstances are echoed several generations later, when the Lord selects David – the youngest son from the “least among the clans of Judah” – to be the anointed king of Israel. God chooses the *lowliest* champions to make it *undeniably* obvious that victory comes from him alone.

Even though the connection may not be immediately apparent, the same message also underlies today's Gospel: "it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for one who is rich to enter the Kingdom of God." The problem with being rich is not actually *possessing* money – which is neither good nor bad in itself. What makes it so difficult for a rich person to obtain salvation is the misconception that he can depend on his *own* wealth and power. Money only becomes an obstacle when it prevents us from placing our faith in the *Lord*. As it happens, our currency is even designed to remind us of this fact – the motto inscribed on every single coin and bill *admonishes* us that we should trust in *God*, not in the power of the dollar.

When we reflect upon our own limitations – whether they be financial, physical, or emotional – it is tempting to view them as *roadblocks* to reaching our full potential. If only we had more money, or better health, or more supportive friends – imagine what we could accomplish! Although that is a natural perspective to take, it is almost entirely *backwards*. It is when we are *weak* that we are *strong*, for *that* is when

we have the opportunity to surrender ourselves *fully* to God's strength –
that is when the power of Christ may *truly* come to dwell in each of us.