

MARK 10: 17-31

17 As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, 'Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' ¹⁸Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. ¹⁹You know the commandments: "You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honour your father and mother." ' ²⁰He said to him, 'Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth.' ²¹Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, 'You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.' ²²When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

23 Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, 'How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!' ²⁴And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, 'Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.' ²⁶They were greatly astounded and said to one another, 'Then who can be saved?' ²⁷Jesus looked at them and said, 'For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible.'

28 Peter began to say to him, 'Look, we have left everything and followed you.' ²⁹Jesus said, 'Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, ³⁰who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. ³¹But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.'

Meditation: This is a very richly layered text with several powerful themes. There is Jesus' encounter with a man of wealth. There is his dialogue with his disciples. And there is his promise that no-one who has given up anything of value in this world for the sake of following him, will ultimately regret it. His encounter with the rich man is a difficult one for Jesus, for the man and for us meditating on it today. This man is obviously one of high moral character, conscientious about fulfilling his religious duties and sincere in his desire to live right before God. It is even said that Jesus was drawn to this man. He 'loved' him. But he also knew that this man would never experience true spiritual fulfillment until he let go the one thing that was an obstacle to his complete surrender to God: his wealth.

Clearly for Jesus, wealth is an obstacle, especially when one is attached to it and the benefits it offers in this world. It is an obstacle between a person and God as well as a person and their neighbour. God challenges him to give it up, but he cannot. He would rather grieve his incompleteness of spirit than follow through on complete union with God.

The disciples also find Jesus' teaching here to be difficult, even though they are anything but rich. Why not dream about it like many middle and lower income earners do? The disciples recognize how difficult it is to give up such a dream. So much in us and around us is driven by this dream. But where the human spirit is weak and impotent, God is able to work miracles. This is the substance of Jesus' ministry and the reality of faith: the miraculous powers of God to make things new within us: new energies, fresh convictions and new goals. No one will give up anything for God in a sincere way that will not experience fulfillment and abundance undreamed of compared to anything the world has to offer.

This is also an important lesson for us all in this time of Covid-19. Many are affected financially by the social restrictions. Many are uncertain about the future. It's tempting to hoard rather than share and give away. And yet, perhaps this is also a time to think and rethink about where true value and wealth are to be found, and to begin investing and reinvesting in the treasures of love and generosity that truly matter.

Prayer: We want to give to you and to others, O God, but we are also scared. When is it enough? When can we let go? When can we give away? How can we be free and full at the same time? How can we live ever more simply and yet with an ever greater abundance of riches? May you fill us with your love in a fresh way this day, O God. May you fill us with a new sense of peace, that we have more than enough, and more... We have enough to give away; Amen.