

Mark 10:17-31 The Message (MSG)

¹⁷ As he went out into the street, a man came running up, greeted him with great reverence, and asked, “Good Teacher, what must I do to get eternal life?”

¹⁸⁻¹⁹ Jesus said, “Why are you calling me good? No one is good, only God. You know the commandments: Don’t murder, don’t commit adultery, don’t steal, don’t lie, don’t cheat, honor your father and mother.”

²⁰ He said, “Teacher, I have—from my youth—kept them all!”

²¹ Jesus looked him hard in the eye—and loved him! He said, “There’s one thing left: Go sell whatever you own and give it to the poor. All your wealth will then be heavenly wealth. And come follow me.”

²² The man’s face clouded over. This was the last thing he expected to hear, and he walked off with a heavy heart. He was holding on tight to a lot of things, and not about to let go.

²³⁻²⁵ Looking at his disciples, Jesus said, “Do you have any idea how difficult it is for people who ‘have it all’ to enter God’s kingdom?” The disciples couldn’t believe what they were hearing, but Jesus kept on: “You can’t imagine how difficult. I’d say it’s easier for a camel to go through a needle’s eye than for the rich to get into God’s kingdom.”

²⁶ *That* set the disciples back on their heels. “Then who has any chance at all?” they asked.

²⁷ Jesus was blunt: “No chance at all if you think you can pull it off by yourself. Every chance in the world if you let God do it.”

²⁸ Peter tried another angle: “We left everything and followed you.”

²⁹⁻³¹ Jesus said, “Mark my words, no one who sacrifices house, brothers, sisters, mother, father, children, land—whatever—because of me and the Message will lose out. They’ll get it all back, but multiplied many times in homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children, and land—but also in troubles. And then the bonus of eternal life! This is once again the Great Reversal: Many who are first will end up last, and the last first.”



The rich man who comes to ask Jesus what he should do to inherit eternal life is a good man, sincere in his asking. Only Mark's gospel states that Jesus looked on the rich man and **loved** him.

Out of love, not as judgment, Jesus offers him an open door to life: sell all you own and give it to the poor.

- Our culture bombards us with the message that we will find life by consuming.

The young lawyer wants to know the way to eternal life. He is like every one of us. He is not malicious and greedy but simply struggling with all he possesses and what it means to be possessed by God.

This young lawyer is like every one of us. Jesus loved him. Jesus loves us.

Jesus names a *right relationship* with his possessions as the one thing this lawyer lacks. Jesus' instruction to sell what you own, give the money to the poor, and come follow Jesus was the remedy.

God does not care about your money. He asks:

Who owns you?

What owns you?

Pay attention to the details. What is your relationship with God? Do you love Him more than anything in this world? Do you love Him first? Do you love Him more than money?

Only you know what God wants you to do with your life and the money you make.

What God cares about is how you choose to live, and He asks that you have a right relationship with your money and possessions. God owns you, not the cash.

How do we disempower money and possessions and live into the freedom we have through Jesus' love?

The young lawyer could not do it. He was shocked and went away grieving. The many things this lawyer possesses win in his struggle for eternal life; *his riches, rather than God own him.*

We all struggle with this.

One thing that stands in the way to fully participating in the reign of God in our lives is our money and possessions. Jesus is right when he says a camel going



through the eye of a needle is easier than for a rich man or rich woman who is in love with his or her money to enter the kingdom of God.

- We are human, we get stuck and sometimes we treasure our riches above everything ... and it disrupts or (perhaps it even nullifies?) our relationship with God. So ...
- we are defensive before God and the world as we take credit for what we possess. Why do justify hanging onto it so tightly!!!

Out of love God in Christ frees and claims us by challenging us. God calls for us to be givers. Giving away mercy in pursuit of justice.

Amos reminds us that the poor and needy are God's people, just as we are.

God's people have no excuse to "trample the poor" either by hoarding and greed, or by allowing individuals or institutions to do the same.

We cannot "push aside the needy at the gate" and feel justified because we have responsibilities of our own.

God's priorities of justice and mercy are not changed or redefined by our economics, politics, or personal circumstances. He simply wants our love – first and foremost.

In God's reign there will be plenty for all; not only in grace and forgiveness but when it comes to the necessities of life. What belongs to God will not be hoarded or bought and sold at the expense of peoples' lives. Both Jesus and Amos invite us to seek the way to eternal life and to live in the confidence that we possess it.

Rich is descriptive of more than money.

- Jesus goes deep into our relationship with wealth and possessions when he encounters the rich man who wants to know what he should do to inherit eternal life. We're reminded that we find our life by giving it away.
- How might we do that?

The Bible is full of support and direction on how to live a life of loving God. We have so much to give our neighbors besides money. Prayers, comfort, advice on how to live during corruption; avenues to pursue the systems of humanity.

During this season, we have heard readings from the book of James, who reminds us to be doers of the word, not just hearers;

- to use our speech wisely;



- to feed the hungry;
- to care especially for orphans, widows;
- to honor the earth, give generously, and live in peace.

A multitude of themes rise from James's teachings in this season when we focus on stewardship, church budgets and giving related to the hungry, turkeys for Thanksgiving, and various church funds.

- Jesus looks on us with love. He does not treat you and me as insincere or mock him as self-righteous, but rather Jesus loves us. Every interpretation we may offer must therefore take seriously Jesus' absolute regard and unconditional love for every man, woman and child.
- The rich man is not the only one who is shocked by Jesus' pronouncement (verses 22, 26). So are all those within earshot. Given that wealth was considered a sign of blessing in the first century (as well as in the twenty-first),
- Jesus words to this man and his later statement about the difficulty the rich will have in entering the kingdom are alarming.

Consider what you love first and foremost. Then, act and live as God leads you ... not in fear, but in love. AMEN

