

Mark 10:17-31 A Sly Spiritual Snare Falls OPC//PM//Jan. 15, 2023

Tonight is the story of a rich young man and his encounter with Jesus.

Our co-authors Mark and the Holy Spirit give us unmistakable indicators about the relevance of the story about the rich young man.

Mark chapter 10, verses 13-14, tell us about belonging to the kingdom, receiving the kingdom, and entering the kingdom. Listen to the words of Jesus, “...*Let the children come to Me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.*”

To enter the kingdom of God, does a candidate need to be an adult who is accomplished and have something to offer? No, it is upside down. Quite the opposite. Instead, one must be like a child to belong to the kingdom, receive the kingdom, and even enter the kingdom.

Now let’s ask this question – will someone with great wealth receive the kingdom like a little child would?

Now following that is our story about the rich young man. He is the opposite of a helpless child. He is an adult. He has resources. He did not approach Jesus with nothing. He approached Jesus with great wealth and with a question -what must I do? He was not relying on Jesus. He had great influence.

To enter the kingdom of God, does a candidate need to be rich? No, it is upside down. Quite the opposite. Instead, one who has wealth will have special difficulty entering the kingdom. Listen to the words of Jesus in Mark 10:23, “*And Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, ‘How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!’*”

This story of this rich person is more than simply an expression of the attitude of Jesus toward wealth. Rather, this story is part of a broader critique of conventional human values. The last will be first. It is upside down. The opposite of what we expect. We are seeing the re-education of the disciples of Jesus.

In those days, wealth was welcomed as an irrefutable mark of God’s blessing. Any rabbi who rose from poverty to wealth was commended without qualification. But Jesus turned that on its head.

Jesus presented wealth as a barrier to entry into the kingdom, a barrier that cannot be overcome. It is not just difficult, but impossible.

Jesus warned us about a sly spiritual snare that is impossible to escape without His rescue.

1. The spiritual snare of letting our hearts trust wealth. (v.17-22)

In verse 17, Jesus is on the move again. He is traveling. A man approached Jesus, knelt down, and asked how he could become entitled to receive eternal life?

Verse 18, Jesus questioned the man’s definition of goodness.

Verse 19, Jesus turned to the Ten Commandments.

Verse 20, the man said he kept all of the commandments.

Verse 21, Jesus loved the man! Jesus sorrowfully pitied the man, and decided to recommend to him a course of action which would solve his problem, and would give him the rest of soul that the man needed. Jesus then told the man that he was missing one thing. What is that? His heart was attached to money. In order to separate his heart from money, he would need to give away all of his money.

Jesus could relate to the rich young man. Jesus was also a rich young man. About 30 years old, and he came from heaven's riches. Jesus had lived for all eternity in the glory, wealth and riches of fellowship with God the Father. Paul says about Jesus in 2 Corinthians 8:9, "though [Christ] was rich, for your sake Christ became poor, so that you, through His poverty might become rich."

Jesus was saying to the man that Jesus was richer than anyone had ever known in heaven, and Jesus came here in order enter a poverty deeper than anyone had ever known by dying for us, and coming under the power of death for a time. Why? For you. So, Jesus is warranted to say that since He gave away his "Big riches" to get us, we can give away our "little riches" to follow Jesus. Jesus Himself was the ultimate rich young man who gave away His wealth to get us, and asks us to give away our wealth to get Jesus.

Verse 22, The man could not do it. Instead, he went away sorrowful, because he had a lot of wealth and possessions. His gold would remain his god! A person who endeared himself to the Son of God, and a person who led an exemplary life, can still be an idolater. For this rich young man, to lose his money was to lose himself. Money was for him what God the Father should have been for him. One thing can cost you salvation! Managing wealth can become the priority of your life, and the things of God go by the wayside.

How do you get eternal life? Drop the riches, cling to Jesus! Instead of sadly walking away from Jesus back to riches, walk away from the riches back to Jesus with great joy. That is how to get eternal life. But the man refused. What a sneaky spiritual pitfall is wealth! What a sly spiritual snare! Jesus is right to warn us!

2. The impossibility of escaping the snare of a heart that trusts wealth. (v.23-26)

Verse 23, Jesus said it is difficult for the wealthy to follow God.

Verse 24, again Jesus said, children, it is difficult to enter the kingdom.

Verse 25, it is easier for a camel to go through the hole in a needle than it is for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.

Verse 26, the people responded, then no one can be saved!

Right. That is the point. It is impossible to escape the snare of a heart that trusts wealth.

The disciples of Jesus were exceedingly astonished at the impossibility of salvation.

They were surrounded with the prosperity gospel. The rabbis of Judaism taught that God's favor can be seen in God providing great wealth. We see that in false teachers today, who say God must be blessing him, because he is making a lot of money! And alternatively, God must not be blessing the other fellow, because he is poor.

Jesus spoke up on this issue. Wealth creates such a barrier to people coming childlike in full dependence on Jesus alone for salvation, that humanly speaking, it is impossible for the wealthy to be saved!

Salvation of the wealthy is not something that man can accomplish.

Verse 27, Jesus confirmed when Jesus said, "With man it is impossible."

Verse 23, difficult. Verse 24, difficult. Verse 25, illustration of impossibility.

Verse 27 – outright statement – it is impossible.

Impossible for man. But is it impossible for God? Let's go to our 3rd point.

3. The grace and power of God to save us anyway, and to bless us abundantly. (v.27-31)

If you want to be saved, you have to replace what you have been looking to as your Savior. If you look to money, it is impossible, you cannot buy salvation. If you look to man, it is impossible, because no human can save you.

Instead, you have to look to God as your Savior.

What is the thing that you look to instead of God to help get you through?

Verse 28, Peter said to Jesus, *'we left everything and followed You.'*

It is not just wealth. It is precious things. Verse 29, Jesus acknowledged that it was home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands.

It costs each of us to follow Jesus.

What Jesus says next is very significant. Verse 30, in God's kingdom, the benefits and blessings are too great to imagine or explain.

Try me. Okay. We have a statement from the greatest teacher who ever lived, attempting to explain how great are the benefits of the kingdom.

Whatever it costs you to follow Jesus, you will receive 100 times as much.
Not money. The precious irreplaceable stuff.

Home, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and lands.

Wait, there is a bonus blessing in the list. Persecutions!

To follow Jesus may mean that you will be persecuted.

But that is on the blessing side.

How? Because it shows for sure that you are in the kingdom. It is proof that you share all that Christ has in His kingdom. If you suffer with Christ, you will also reign with Him!

If we serve God and we are deprived of earthly family, it will be made up 100 times in the spiritual family. But this is not even the best part.

What Christ means is that He Himself makes up for every loss.

If you lose a mother's affection and concern, you get back 100 times the affection and concern of Christ Himself.

If you lose the home feel of your previous house, you get back 100 times the sense of home because Christ is your comfort and security.

Christ is saying that He promises to be so much blessing to us, that we will not experience the loss of what we gave up to follow Him.

When you have Christ, you did not lose anything!

When you have Christ, you gained everything! Christ is everything!

SI – if you have a garage sale, you go through your belonging and put tags of value on them. If we take a similar moment for our lives, we go through our lives putting value tags on them, we only have two tags. Everything and rubbish. On Christ we put the tag that says “Everything” and on everything else we put the tag “rubbish.” Paul wrote in Philippians 3:7, “...*whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have suffered the loss of all thing and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.*”

If you have that perspective, then you are not caught in the snare of wealth.

Conclusion:

1. Give Jesus first place in your life. In the language of the Ten Commandments, this is a first commandment issue – have no other gods that take the place of God in your life. Put nothing ahead of God in your mind and heart. Put away anything that is an obstacle. Because of what Jesus said to His disciples about what He was willing to do for them, Jesus was able to command the highest commitment from them. In Mark 9:31-32, Jesus taught His disciples how He would save them from

the snare of wealth and all other sins, *“The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And when He is killed, after three days He will rise. But [the disciples] did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask Him.”* Jesus demands of us as disciples, the same that Jesus demanded of his original 12 disciples - that we give Him the top place of priority in our lives above all other people and things. Colossians 1:18, *“[Christ] is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything He might be preeminent.”*

2. Beware of the love of money. You can have the love of money if you have a lot of money, and you can have the love of money if you have no money. This is not about your wealth or poverty. This is about your heart. Paul wrote to young Timothy, in 1 Timothy 6:10, *“...the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith...”* We use our money to serve Christ with generosity, and we live with contentment.

3. If you are suffering, then conduct a value inventory. Go through your life and put the proper value tag on each item. Let me help you, 2 Corinthians 4:17, *“...this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison...”* What if your affliction prevented you from becoming luke-warm in your walk with God? How do you put a price tag on that? The first will be last, and the last will be first. The rich young man became last. The poor wandering disciples became first. Jesus was saying to the rich young man, “I want you to imagine life without any money at all. All you have is Me. Am I enough?” Jesus is saying the same to us. If you are suffering, conduct a value inventory. You have Jesus and nothing else. Was it worth it?