

Mark 10:17–31

¹⁷ As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up, knelt down before him, and asked him, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” ¹⁸ Jesus answered him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. ¹⁹ You know the commandments: ‘You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; you shall not defraud; honor your father and your mother.’” ²⁰ He replied and said to him, “Teacher, all of these I have observed from my youth.” ²¹ Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said to him, “You are lacking in one thing. Go, sell what you have, and give to (the) poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” ²² At that statement his face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions. ²³ Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!” ²⁴ The disciples were amazed at his words. So Jesus again said to them in reply, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ 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.” ²⁶ They were exceedingly astonished and said among themselves, “Then who can be saved?” ²⁷ Jesus looked at them and said, “For human beings it is impossible, but not for God. All things are possible for God.”

²⁸ Peter began to say to him, “We have given up everything and followed you.” ²⁹ Jesus said, “Amen, I say to you, there is no one who has given up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the sake of the gospel ³⁰ who will not receive a hundred times more now in this present age: houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and eternal life in the age to come. ³¹ But many that are first will be last, and (the) last will be first.”

Context

Jesus has been consistently teaching his disciples the meaning of the Kingdom in his examples and explanations: greatness means to serve the least among the people (9:36-37). He has already told them that the path of discipleship will consist, not just of demonstrations of power (healing and casting out demons), but also one in which one “*must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.*” (8:34) At times these lessons have come at the end of a dispute with the Pharisees or scribes as we saw in the previous Sunday gospel. There Jesus tells the disciples about the creative intent of God in the formation of marriage and family (10:2-16) as a means of describing the Kingdom echoed in human experience.

The story of the rich man is found in all three synoptics (Matthew, Mark and Luke), with individual variations. Matthew (Matt. 19:20) remarks on his youth, while Luke records that he was a ‘ruler’ (Luke 18:18).

And without comment, all gospel writers point to his great possessions (Mark 10:22), so different from the ‘evangelical poverty’ in which the disciples lived. What is unsaid in all the gospels is the perception of wealth among “good people.” Who would be better qualified for the kingdom other than those people God is clearly blessing with wealth, prestige, and privilege? Well, at least in the estimate



of the standards of 1st century Palestine – and in some measure, today also. There are more than one church that proclaims wealth as the fruit of one’s faith and God’s blessing. Seen in that wider perspective, the story of the rich man is more than simply an expression of Jesus’ attitude to wealth; it is part of a broader critique of conventional human values. It is well placed following the passages in which Jesus points to the children and least among us as the ones we are to serve.

As with last weekend, in this Sunday gospel, the idea of the Kingdom remains key. More to the point, this passage addresses the essence of Jesus’ teaching concerning entrance into the Kingdom of God. Perhaps not as apparent in the previous Sunday gospel, when modern listeners tend to focus on divorce and adultery, this gospel makes clear the giftedness of the Kingdom. Entrance into eternal life is not earned, but is accepted in love. But Love has its demands. The call to self-denial in order to follow Jesus, sounded earlier in 8:34–38 and 9:33–37, is repeated in v. 21. The demand imposed upon the man who wishes to enter the Kingdom (cf. Ch. 9:42–50) is heightened, and the utter impossibility of attaining the Kingdom through human achievement is underscored in v. 27. The incident of the wealthy man who sought out Jesus in order to learn the requirements for securing eternal life provides the setting for a startling proclamation of the demands and the nature of the Kingdom.

The man, upon hearing the demands of entry into the kingdom, was disheartened and went away sad. How about the disciples? In the following Sunday gospel, after the 3rd prediction of the Passion, they will return to their arguments about ambition. Perhaps “blind ambition,” as this scene will be followed by the encounter with Blind Bartimaeus.

It is good to recall the words of Jesus already given: “...but worldly anxiety, the lure of riches, and the craving for other things intrude and choke the word, and it bears no fruit.” (Mark 4:19)

Commentary

¹⁷ *As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up, knelt down before him, and asked him, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”*

The Way. The beginning of the Gospel according to Mark begins with John the Baptist citing Isaiah speaking of the messenger: “*he will prepare your way...Prepare the way of the Lord.*” (Mark 1:2-3) In both verses the underlying word is *hodos*. There are other places in Mark when *hodos* is used and is translated as ‘way’ – e.g., “*the way of God in accordance with the truth,*” and describing Jesus and the apostles “*on the way*” in 8:27 and 10:32. So it is odd that in 10:17, the same word *hodos* is translated as journey in the New American Bible (NAB).

The NAB translation of “journey” in v. 17 and “road” in v. 32 misses a connection that Mark makes with the use of the Greek *hodos* used in both verses. The meaning of the word is “way; road; journey” [EDNT 491]. The choice of journey – which is accurate – takes away an easy reference for the reader to point to a figurative meaning of one’s “way of life.” This reference to the simpler meaning of *hodos* became a title for the believers in Christ, “who belong to the Way” (Ac 9:2; also Ac 18:25, 26; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14).

If Mark intends *hodos* to remind us of Jesus’ way heading towards the cross, then we have the contrast between Jesus who is going to give up his very life for the sake of the gospel and the rich man who can’t part with his possessions.

The Promise. A man (rich young man in Luke) enthusiastically approaches Jesus. The man’s kneeling posture and the formal address together with the weighty character of his question—all suggest deep respect for Jesus and genuine earnestness on the part of the man himself. He came to consult Jesus as a distinguished rabbi and showed him the deference reserved for revered teachers of the Law. He asks

“*what must I do to inherit eternal life?*” As Stoffregen notes, it is a rather odd question – if inheritance is a gift, then you need do nothing. He writes:

“Could you image going up to the richest man in the world and asking, ‘What must I do to inherit your great fortune? or even a small part of your fortune?’ The answer would probably be, ‘Get out of here! You can do nothing. I don’t know you. You’re not related to me. You’re not getting even one penny from me.’ On the other hand, it is nearly as absurd for a child to ask a father, ‘Dad, what must I do to inherit part of your estate?’ The answer would probably be, ‘You can’t do anything. You are my child, so you will naturally inherit it. Your name has been in my will since the time of your birth.’”

I think we quickly grasp his point, but I would suggest that we should stop for a moment and consider how often our religious language raises questions about our understanding of the great gifts of God – those things that can never be earned. It shows up in simple expressions most notably around special feast days, especially ones in which Catholics, of good intent and disposition, speak of “getting” grace because they prayed a novena, went to Confession, and received Eucharist. Every one of those moments was an encounter with God’s unmerited grace and love. The only question is whether you were open and “received” the grace. Perhaps I make too much of small nuances in language, but it seems to me “getting” grace lingers on the border of “I did this and that and now I have earned...” We are owed nothing, but we are promised everything!

The Good. “*Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?*” Jesus answered him, “*Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone.*”

In the Hebrew Scriptures only God is called “good,” although it was permissible to speak of “the good man” (e.g. Proverbs 12:2 etc.) as a characteristic derived from one’s fidelity to God. But the expression “*Good teacher*” has no parallel in Scripture or Jewish sources. One can only take it as a true expression of the man’s estimation of Jesus as someone close to God who would teach with wisdom.

There is a lot that can be taken from Jesus’ reply. The latter is a reminder that God alone is referred to as “good” – something apart from kind, generous, or another associated attribute. The former part, the question, is never answered by the rich man. Why does he call Jesus “*Good teacher?*” Given the eschatological setting (eternal life) it would seem that the rich man has concluded that Jesus possesses unique knowledge and insight about entry requirements to life eternal. Lane [365] notes: “The form of the question (“*What must I do to inherit eternal life?*”) implies a piety of achievement which stands in contrast to Jesus’ teaching that a man must *receive* the Kingdom (or life) as a gift from God in his helplessness (10:15). In the light of v. 20, the man evidently thought that there were conditions to be fulfilled beyond those set forth in the Law.”

Jesus response directs the rich man’s attention to God – the source of goodness. He is challenged to consider “goodness.” No doubt, he regards himself as “good” in that he was sure he had fulfilled the commandments from his earliest days. Perhaps his question to Jesus is just a sign of looking for assurance. Perhaps he truly wanted a “to-do” list. Jesus’ question asks him to change the reference of his concerns and assurance from centered on what he himself can accomplish to what God will give him if we will receive it. Jesus’ answer invites him to recognize that his only hope is an utter reliance upon God, who alone can bestow eternal life.

But what must I do? “*Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?*”¹⁸ Jesus answered him,¹⁹ *You know the commandments: ‘You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; you shall not defraud; honor your father and your mother.’”*²⁰ He replied and said to [Jesus], “*Teacher, all of these I have observed from my youth.*”

In responding more directly to the question, Jesus directs the man to the Law (especially Dt 30:15 and following; Ezekiel 33:15 as well) – the one who obeys the law will live. Other than “*you shall not defraud*” the list is straight from the Ten Commandments ((Ex. 20:12–16; Deut. 5:16–20) and covers one’s moral conduct in relationship with others – certainly one measure of a person’s reverence for God and obedience to his precepts. There is one measure of “goodness” for the inquirer – do you accept the will of God revealed in the Law?

It is with confidence that the man replies “*Teacher, all of these I have observed from my youth.*” Still, his question to Jesus suggests that behind a façade of security there was a heart which had lost much of its security and is now concerned with the dimensions of his own piety. Has he lost his joy and delight in God? Does he think that he now lacks the approval of God?

The Way Gets Harder. ²¹ *Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said to him, “You are lacking in one thing. Go, sell what you have, and give to (the) poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.”* ²² *At that statement his face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions.*

Did you know that this is the only place in the gospels of Mark, Matthew, or Luke that Jesus is said to love (*agapaō*) someone. Then Jesus says, “give it all away and follow me.” When I have told Bible Study groups the uniqueness of this statement of love, it is not uncommon to hear a quip, “And this is love? I’ll take a pass.” It is said in jest, but... all recognize that suddenly the high bar got very high.

Jesus notes that the man is “*is lacking in one thing.*” But what? We are not told; we can only infer from what follows. Is he unable to sell all his possessions? Is he unable to give to the poor? Note that Jesus doesn’t say that he has to give all that he had to the poor. Is he unable to leave his worldly life behind and come and follow Jesus? Is he unable to do what Jesus asks because he has “many possessions” or because he is too attached to those possessions? What constitutes “many possessions” rather than having just enough? Hard to say, but the command to sell his property and to distribute the proceeds to the poor pointed to new status among the poor the poor and helpless. Just the thought of that new status dramatizes the fact that man is helpless in his quest for eternal life.

Is this a general instruction for all? I would argue, no. It is addressed to this particular person in his wholeness of attitude and understanding about God’s will. Yet it is a demand for a piety that goes beyond the requirements of the Law. Lane [367] speculates that the “one thing he lacks is the self-sacrificing devotion which characterizes every true follower of Jesus... Jesus’ summons in this context means that true obedience to the Law is rendered ultimately in discipleship. This man will achieve the perfect observance of the Law when he surrenders himself and follows Jesus. Self-surrender implies a renunciation of his own achievement and the reception of messianic forgiveness through which a man is released to stand under the Law and to offer the obedience of love.”

...then come, follow me. The deepest answer to the question of v. 17, however, lies not in the command to sell all but in the call to follow Jesus. The command to follow Jesus is an invitation to lay hold of authentic life offered as a gift in his own person. Jesus’ demand is radical in character. He claims the man utterly and completely, and orders the removal of every other support which could interfere with an unconditional obedience. The terms defined by Jesus clarify what following signifies (cf. 10:28), and indicate that Jesus himself is the one answer to the man’s quest for life.

...and he went away sad, for he had many possessions. The response could not have been more vivid and instantaneous. His tragic decision to turn away reflects a greater love for his possessions than for life (cf. 4:19). The call of the Kingdom of God includes a demand for unyielding self-denial (cf. 8:34). Refusing the call only serves to accentuate the greatness of the renunciation demanded and the uniqueness of the Twelve as those who had abandoned everything in order to follow Jesus.

Problem of Wealth? ²³ Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!” ²⁴ The disciples were amazed at his words. So Jesus again said to them in reply, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ 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.” ²⁶ They were exceedingly astonished and said among themselves, “Then who can be saved?” ²⁷ Jesus looked at them and said, “For human beings it is impossible, but not for God. All things are possible for God.”

Before we address the question of wealth, the larger question is really “Who can be saved?” The answer in v.21 is clear – human beings cannot save themselves. Just can’t do it. But, nothing is impossible for God. Stoffregen writes: “The answer to ‘how hard?’ is ‘It’s impossible.’ Whenever we make it ‘possible’ to do with enough work or sacrifice, we miss the radical nature of Jesus’ comments; which were especially revolting because (1) it was naturally assumed that the wealthy were closer to God and were more likely to be saved than the common people and (2) it was naturally assumed that those who kept the commandments were closer to God and were more likely to be saved than the common people. The man in our text fulfilled both requirements -- but doesn’t enter the kingdom -- at least not based on his righteousness or wealth.”

And then there is the camel-eye-of-the-needle comment. There has been a lot of energy spent on that verse – which is good for the most part. But there has been a lot of energy seeking to change the presentation and understanding of the metaphor. Some later manuscripts make a one letter change in the word for camel from *kamelon* to *kamilon*, meaning “rope.” Then, a rope puts things in the realm of possibility. Another interpretation says that the “Needle’s Eye” was the name of a small gate into the city of Jerusalem. This was the way one had to enter after the main gates were closed. In order for someone to get a camel through this small gate, the camel would have to be unloaded and bow down to get through the small door. There is no evidence that such a small door was ever called “the needle’s eye”. France (*The Gospel of Mark*, 405) goes on to state: “But worse than the lack of evidence for this conjecture is its effect in actually undermining the point of the proverb. That which Jesus presented as ludicrously impossible is turned into a remote possibility: the rich person, given sufficient unloading and humility, might just possibly be able to squeeze in. That was not what Jesus’ proverb meant, and it was not how the disciples understood it (v. 26).” Witherington [284] suggests that Jesus is “contrasting the largest animal and the smallest hole that an early Jew in Israel would likely think of.” All-in-all, they seem to be attempts to dilute the impossibility of getting a camel through the eye of a needle. It is a way of making the impossible possible for us to do – which is the fundamental problem Jesus is trying to address.

“In Judaism it was inconceivable that riches should be a barrier to the Kingdom, since a significant strand of OT teaching regarded wealth and substance as marks of God’s favor (e.g. Job 1:10; 42:10; Ps. 128:1–2; Isa. 3:10 and often). If a related strand of the tradition recognized the poor as the special objects of God’s protection (e.g. Deut. 15:7–11; Prov. 22:22f.), the possession of wealth permitted generous gifts to those in need. This aspect of personal and public concern was one of the three major pillars of Jewish piety (almsgiving, fasting and prayer). The affirmation of v. 23 was shocking precisely because it entails the rejection of the concept of merit accumulated through the good works accomplished by the rich, which was presupposed in contemporary Judaism. There is no mark of God’s special favor in possessions, nor in the lack of them. The peculiar danger confronting the rich, however, lies in the false sense of security which wealth creates and in the temptation to trust in material resources and personal power when what is demanded by the Law and the gospel is a whole-hearted reliance upon God.” [Lane, 369]

Then who can be saved? When the disciples expressed their surprise, Jesus repeated his solemn warning in an absolute form: how hard it is to enter the Kingdom of God. But they understand the broader eschatological implications: this is not just a concern for the rich, it is about the barriers that

any one faced in trying to earn entrance into the Kingdom, and they were frightened by this implication. Who will be found in the Kingdom? Will it include me? Jesus' response in v. 27 provides the key to the sober declarations in the immediate context and to the gospel he proclaimed. Salvation is completely beyond the sphere of human possibilities and lays completely within in the power of God. The conclusion to the account returns to the beginning by directing attention to the ability and goodness of God, and constitutes the basis for the renewal of a theology of hope.

The Rewards of Discipleship. ²⁸ *Peter began to say to him, "We have given up everything and followed you."* ²⁹ *Jesus said, "Amen, I say to you, there is no one who has given up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the sake of the gospel ³⁰ who will not receive a hundred times more now in this present age: houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and eternal life in the age to come. ³¹ But many that are first will be last, and (the) last will be first."*

Earlier (3:35) Jesus had redefined his family. "(For) whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother." For many of the first believers, following Jesus meant leaving everything behind. What one gained by leaving the biological family behind was the faith-community, those who were doing the will of God.

Peter again acts as the spokesman for the Twelve. His response stands in stark contrast to the refusal of the rich man to follow Jesus. The Twelve had abandoned everything in order to follow Jesus (Ch. 1:16–20; 2:14). Lane [371-2] notes that "Jesus' response defines Christian existence in terms of promise and persecution, and history as the interplay of blessedness and suffering. The contrast between the present age and the age to come is thoroughly Palestinian in character and expresses the tension between promise and fulfillment in the life of faith. The frank recognition of the loss that allegiance to Jesus and the gospel may entail (cf. 13:12f.) is conditioned by the promise that all that is lost in one society (v. 29) will be regained a hundredfold in the new society created by the dynamic of the gospel (v. 30). This reassurance is addressed to any man who suffers loss for Jesus and the gospel. God takes nothing away from a man without restoring it to him in a new and glorious form. Jesus' reference to the new family which will compensate for the loss sustained in one's own family finds its preparation in 3:31–35."

A Final Thought

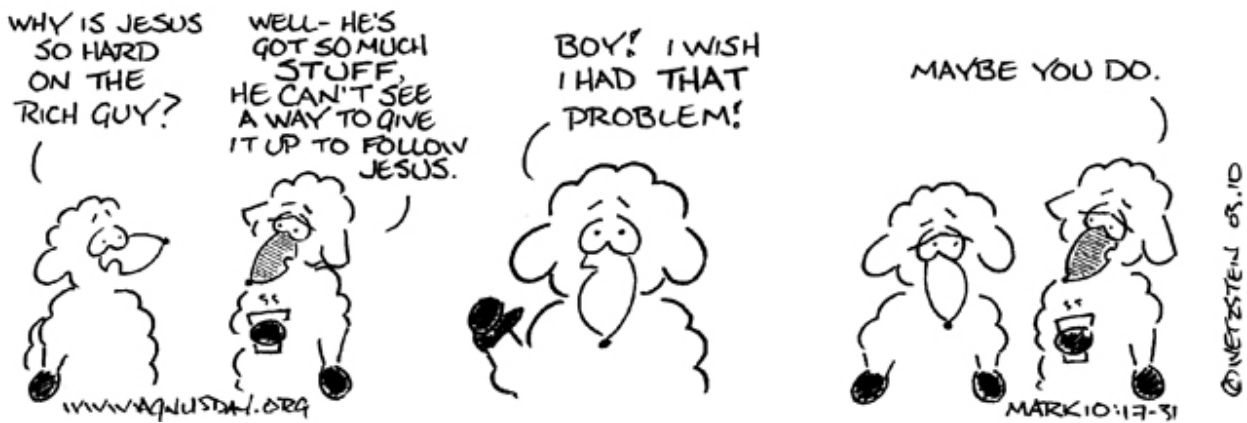
From Brian Stoffregen:

A dictionary definition of "sacrifice" is: "an act of giving up something valued for the sake of something else regarded as more important or worthy." A key to a sacrifice is giving up **something valued**. We seldom are confronted with giving up things that we **value** for the sake of Christ who should be regarded as more important or worthy. How often are things donated to the church, things a family wants to get rid of -- something they no longer value? Such giving can't be called a "sacrifice".

Frequently testimonies talk about giving the worst things in one's life in order to follow Jesus, e.g., addictions, swearing, promiscuity, etc. In contrast, Paul's testimony in Philippians 3:4-11 indicates that he gave up the very best things in his life, the most righteous things in his life, for the sake of the gospel.

What are some things that we value that Christ might ask us to give up in order to follow him? Soccer practices on Sunday? Watching football games on Sunday? Buying a new car?

However, if we are giving such things up only because we expect even greater things from following Christ, then we have probably haven't given up our most important possession, the control of our own lives and destinies.



Notes

Mark 10:17 setting out on a journey. Jerusalem as the destination of the journey is made explicit in Mark 10:32. In the Greek, *hodos*, (vv. 17,32) is more literally translated as “the way.” Some who argue that this simpler translation is better suited to the verses as it takes on a figurative meaning of one’s “way of life.” Even more specifically, *hodos* became a title for the believers in Christ, “who belong to the Way” (Acts 9:2; also Acts 18:25, 26; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14).

what must I do to inherit eternal life? The question presupposes that salvation is the product of human effort. This is the only place that Mark uses the verb “inherit.”

Mark 10:18 Why do you call me good? Why do you call me good?: Jesus repudiates the term “good” for himself and directs it to God, the source of all goodness who alone can grant the gift of eternal life; cf Mt 19:16–17. Jesus rejected the “good teacher” greeting of the questioner, probably to avoid condescension by the rich man. The man’s remark was not insincere, just misdirected. Jesus would answer as required, and not because he was complimented. Jesus’ saying that “only God is truly good” puts the man on notice that he would get a direct reply and that his only concern was with God’s honor.

Mark 10:19 you know the commandments. Jesus responded by noting the second part of the Ten Commandments, which deals with human relationships (Exod 20:12–16; Deut 5:16–20), thus showing his commitment to the relational aspect of spiritual life. God desires a response that pursues righteousness. The reference to defrauding replaces the idea of coveting, and possibly concretizes that commandment. The fourth commandment comes last in this list, the only commandment listed that isn’t expressed negatively.

Mark 10:20 all of these I have observed from my youth. The rich man had no sense of lack, for he said that his record of obedience was unblemished. He had kept (lit., “guarded”) the commandments from his youth. He possibly anticipated affirmation, but Jesus had not finished with him yet.

Mark 10:21 Jesus loved for him. The text makes it clear that Jesus’ demand was rooted in his love for the man and in his awareness that he needed to redirect his life priorities.

sell what you have ... follow me. The call to go and sell is expressed as an aorist imperative, which, in the Greek, calls for a single decisive act.

Mark 10:22 he went away sad, for he had many possessions. The man’s departure answers the questions. This is the first place in Mark’s narrative that we are told that the man was wealthy. He left because he could not respond positively to Jesus’ instruction. There is some question as to whether the

man departed with sadness or anger, as the term *stugnazō* speaks of a face that falls and can refer to anger (Ezek 26:16; Dan 2:12; Wis 17:5), to being gloomy, or to being appalled (Ezek 27:35; 32:10), which may fit best here. His possessions meant more to him than serving others with what he owned and more than following Jesus to gain eternal life. The passage echoes 4:19 and 8:35–37. Affluence can be a real barrier to knowing God (France 2002:400–401).

Mark 10:23 *How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the Kingdom of God!* Jesus used the rich man’s reaction to typify the problem the rich have in responding to Jesus and his teaching on the Kingdom. The illustration that follows argues that such entry is impossible without God’s help. The idea is repeated in Mark 10:24 to emphasize the point. The word used for “hard” (*duskolōs*) usually pictures someone who is hard to please, but here it pertains to something that is difficult to accomplish.

Mark 10:24 *The disciples were amazed* The remarks amazed (*ethambounto*) the disciples; the term used suggests that they were surprised and could not entirely process what Jesus was saying (1:27; Mark 10:32; Acts 3:11).

Mark 10:25 *it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle.* Despite efforts to argue otherwise by differently interpreting the eye of the needle, Jesus’ point is that in human terms, entry into the Kingdom by the rich is impossible, as Mark 10:27 makes clear. The rhetorical point is that it is harder for a rich person to enter the Kingdom on his or her own than for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle. Rabbis used the illustration of an elephant going through the eye of a needle (*b. Bava Metzi’a* 38b). Jeremiah offered that one of the night gates in Jerusalem was referred to as the “eye of the needle” because only one lightly loaded camel could pass through it (the tightness was a way of limiting entry into the city during night hours). Unfortunately, no evidence of such a gate is known to any other scholars.

Mark 10:26 *Then who can be saved?* The disciples’ reaction came from their understanding that the rich were blessed by God (Job 1:10; 42:10; Isa 3:10; Lane 1974:369). If the rich could not enter into the Kingdom, who could? In this verse, the disciples have moved from the amazement of Mark 10:24 to exceeding astonishment. The verb *exoplēssonto* means being amazed to the extent of being overwhelmed (1:22; 6:2; 7:37; 11:18).

Mark 10:27 *All things are possible for God.* Jesus’ reply makes it clear that God is able to do what man cannot do (on this idea, see Gen 18:14; Job Mark 10:13; 42:2; Zech 8:6). A heart changed by God *can* embrace Jesus and his call.

Mark 10:28 *We have given up everything and followed you.* Now Peter wanted reassurance that the disciples had responded to Jesus’ call. He asked with some uncertainty and anxiety, hoping that Jesus would affirm the disciples’ commitment, which he did. The verb for “leaving” is in the aorist tense, denoting a renunciation that took place in the past, while the perfect tense of “following” looks to the ongoing effects of choosing to follow Jesus.

Mark 10:30 *who will not receive hundred times more now in this present age: ... along with persecution.* Jesus promised that a new family and home—those of the church—would await the follower who made this sacrifice, but they would also experience persecution. The term for persecution (*diōgmos*) always refers to religious persecution in the NT (Acts 8:1; 13:50; 2 Cor 12:10; 2 Thess 1:4).

and eternal life in the age to come. Now the passage comes full circle back to the rich man’s question in Mark 10:17. People who align themselves with Jesus and the Gospel will gain eternal life in the world to come. A person is not saved by something he or she does, but by the one with whom they establish a relationship. In other parts of the NT, this means exercising faith in God and in the one he sent, Jesus Christ.

Mark 10:31 *But many that are first will be last, and (the) last will be first.* There is some discussion

as to whether the remark affirms the disciples' choice or is a rebuke in light of Peter's outburst in Mark 10:28, but the reaffirmation of their commitment in Mark 10:29–30 favors an affirmation here.

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