

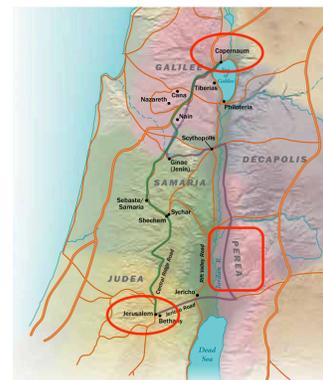
Mark 10:13–31 — Jesus Does The Impossible

November 17, 2019

We live in a world that tells us we can do anything. If work hard enough, if we try long enough, we can do anything. To be honest, that just isn't true. There are lot of things we can't do because we don't have the money, time, or talents. To illustrate what I mean, here are a few things we can't do, no matter how hard we try. It is impossible to lick your elbow. We can try hard to do it, but none of us can. It is impossible to sneeze with our eyes open. Don't try to do it. I don't want you to pop an eyeball onto the floor. It is impossible to tickle yourself. It is also impossible to wiggle one ear. According to the Internet, it is also impossible to draw a number six in the air while making clockwise circles with your leg. I haven't tried it but after service somebody can try it and let me know if it is true.

There are a lot of things that are impossible to do. It doesn't matter how long we try or how hard we try, there are some things we cannot do. This morning, we are going to look at one thing that is impossible for us to do. It doesn't matter how long or how hard we try. We cannot do it. Thankfully, what was impossible for us to do, God did for us. I am glad he did.

Turn in your Bibles to Mark 19:17. While you are turning, let me take a moment to orient you to our passage. In our study of the Gospel of Mark, Jesus was on his final trip to Jerusalem. Mark 11 begins the final week of Jesus' life before he died for our sin on the cross and rose from the grave to offer us new life. When we left off our study two weeks ago, Jesus was in the



area of Perea, just east of Jerusalem. In this story, Jesus was walking on the Jericho road to Jerusalem. It is that small purple line between Perea and Jerusalem on our map. On that road, Jesus went downhill to the city of Jericho then just before he got to Jerusalem, he had a steep climb to get to the city. As Jesus was on this road, he was approached by a man. Let's read what happens.

And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.'" And he said to him, "Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth." And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. 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!" And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to him, "Then who can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God." Peter began to say to him, "See, we have left everything and followed you." Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first." Mark 10:17–31 (ESV)

We will break our study of this event under four headings: 1. Money can be a subtle but powerful idol in our lives. 2. Money is a spiritual liability, not an asset. Next, we will get to the main point of our passage. 3. Only God can do the impossible. Finally, we will ask whose shoes it is better to be in at the end of this story, Peter's or the rich young ruler's?

Money can be a subtle and powerful idol.

And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Mark 10:17 (ESV)

We have a man who ran up to Jesus and knelt before him. From Matthew and Luke, who also record this event, we know this man was young and very wealthy. That is why he is often called the rich young ruler. The term ruler probably means he was the ruler in a local synagogue. In the social life of Israel at this time, the title “ruler” was given to the highest ranking man in a synagogue. This guy was not a Pharisee or Sadducee. He was not a professional religious man. He was a wealthy lay person that rose to be the leading lay person of his synagogue. That was an unusual position for a man of his age. This was usually a position reserved for older men who were called elders. This young man had achieved the position being the ruler in a synagogue at a young age. This guy was the Mark Zuckerberg of his day. He was young, extremely successful in business, and rich. Would anybody like to be in his position? I think everybody would.

His life was exactly where he wanted it. He owned lots of property. He had financial independence. Everyone admired him for his financial success. He was not just young, rich, and in charge of his local synagogue but he was also spiritually respected by his synagogue. Synagogue rulers were voted into that position by the people of the synagogue. People didn't just admire his keen business sense. They didn't just see him as a good leader. The people of his synagogue admired his walk with God. That is why they appointed him to this

position. Remember this was very unusual for a man his age. This guy had a lot of things going right for him. We would all like to have been in his shoes.

Notice what else he did right. He came running to Jesus. In that culture, running was reserved for slaves. People of his status didn't run. They didn't rush. It was undignified for the rich and powerful to run. For example, you don't see President Trump or Vice President Pence running. That would be undignified for men in their position. Yet this man ran to Jesus. This means getting to Jesus was so important to him that he was willing to embarrass himself to do it. I like this about the guy.

The other good thing he did was kneel in front of Jesus. Remember this man's identity. He was the ruler of their synagogue, yet he took on the posture of a humble man, not a proud man. This man was commendable. He was young, wealthy, a good business leader, a godly man, and a humble man who wanted to meet with Jesus. This guy had a lot of good stuff going for him.

The problem is that after all of the things he did right to be the best person he could be, he had this funny feeling that he hadn't done enough to inherit eternal life. After doing so many things right in his life, he had this sneaky feeling he had left something undone to be right with God. That is why he came running to Jesus. He came before Jesus with a notebook in his hand asking, "What else must I do to save myself? Give me a religious work, a pilgrimage, a large check to write. I will do it. I will add to my already long list of fantastic achievements that I also saved myself."

While this guy had a lot of good things going for him, and all of us would envy his business, spirituality, and character, he had a sneaky feeling he still needed to do more to save himself and make himself right with God.

While this guy had so many good things going for him, the problem was that he knew it. He trusted his goodness to save him, and that was the problem. Jesus was going to unmask the problem the ruler had of thinking of himself as a good man. Jesus did that by asking the young man about the way he casually threw around the word “good.”

And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. Mark 10:18 (ESV)

The rich young man called Jesus “good,” not because he knew Jesus was God but simply because he saw Jesus like he saw himself. He saw Jesus as a good teacher because he was better than other teachers.

Jesus was going to get to the heart of the problem in this man’s life. To do that, he needed to talk with him about throwing around the word “good” too loosely because no one is good except God alone.

You see, this man used the word good as a relative term. He thought Jesus was good compared to others. Jesus wanted him to redefine the word “good” and make it an absolute term. The only one who is truly good is God. When people start comparing themselves to the goodness of God instead of other people around them, it doesn’t take long for people to realize they are not as good as they thought they were. Once this rich young ruler started comparing himself to God instead of comparing himself to others, it would have been a crushing blow to his heart.

As the ruler of a Jewish synagogue, he should have known the Psalms. Many of the Psalms tell us there is no one who is truly good but God alone. When we compare ourselves to God, we quickly see that none of us are good, no not one. Paul quoted a collage of Psalms about God's goodness compared to our goodness in Romans 3. Let me read a little of Romans 3 show you what many of the Psalms say about our goodness compared to God's goodness.

...as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one." Romans 3:10–12 (ESV)

Paul was citing from Psalm 14 and 53. Many other Psalms say the same thing. Psalm 143; 5; 140; 10; and 36 all say none of us are good compared to God.

How do we know what God's goodness looks like? The answer to that is the Old Testament law of God. They show us what holiness and purity looks like. There are 613 laws in just the first five books of the Old Testament. Some people looked at the Old Testament laws and tried to focus on how many they kept in order to make them feel good about themselves. The rich young ruler was somebody who did that. That wasn't the purpose of the Old Testament laws. They were not given to make us feel good about ourselves. They were meant to make us feel bad about ourselves. As Paul said in Romans 7 and 8, God's laws were given to drive us to Christ. God's laws were given to show us we are not good and we need Christ because we are deeply sinful and cannot save ourselves.

The Old Testament laws were not meant to be a ladder up which we climb to God, like this rich young ruler was trying to do. They were meant to be a mirror

to show us how far short we fall from God. The rich young ruler missed the whole purpose of the law. Instead of the law showing him how screwed up he was before God, he used the law as a point of pride to think about how good he was compared to others.

His conclusion about himself was, that compared to others, Jesus was good and he was good. His goodness was the way he was trying to get into the kingdom of God. The problem was he wasn't comparing himself to God. He was not honestly measuring his life against God's law. Jesus gave him a little test to show him his problem. Jesus turned him to God's law. Let's see how the young man did.

You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.' " And he said to him, "Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth." Mark 10:19–20 (ESV)

Jesus went to Exodus 20 and the Ten Commandments. He began quoting them. Some of you may remember from our study of the Ten Commandments that they are broken into two parts. The first four commandments are vertical in nature and pertain to our relationship with God. The last six are horizontal in nature and pertain to our relationships with one another. Jesus went to the second part of the Ten Commandments that pertains to our relationships with one another and began quoting them. He said to this man, "How are you doing in these areas? Murder, adultery, stealing, and honoring your father and mother — how are you doing with these commandments?" The guy said, "Great! I have kept all of them since I was a boy."

You know what that shows? He was living a delusion. He only understood the surface of the law, not the depth of the law. Not only did this man think he was good because he compared himself to others instead of God but when he compared himself to God through God's laws, he only skimmed the surface, not plumbed the full depth of their meaning. As we learned in our study of the Ten Commandments, all of these commandments were intended to go much deeper than just the surface of our lives. They were meant to apply to the depths of our lives. Jesus in his Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5 pointed this out.

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire.” Matthew 5:21–22 (ESV)

It is wrong to murder someone with our hands, but this commandment means it is also wrong to murder someone in our hearts. This commandment is about more than just the things we do with our hands. It is about the hatred we harbor in our hearts.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” Matthew 5:27–28 (ESV)

The command tells us not to commit adultery. The command goes much deeper than committing the actual act of adultery. The command means we are not to lust after someone of the opposite sex in our hearts. Most men struggle to not violate this command in their thought lives at least a dozen times a day.

So we see this rich young man may be a good guy but he had an understanding of what goodness looks like as only an external understanding of the law. This external understanding of the law didn't touch his heart. If he had an

internal understanding of the law of God, he wouldn't look at God's laws and feel good about himself, but he would feel heartbroken about himself. Remember that God's laws are designed to leave us devastated. They are designed to lead us to Christ.

So this rich young ruler was a violator of the second half of the Ten Commandments, but he didn't realize it because he thought they only applied to the external things of his life, not the internal heart issues of his life.

Then Jesus turned the tables again and showed him he was breaking earlier parts of the Ten Commandments as well. There are the commandments that pertain to God and our relationship with him. Do you remember the first commandment? You shall have no other God's before me. Do you remember the second commandment? You shall not make an idol.

Look how Jesus put his finger right into this man's heart and showed him he had another god he was worshipping in his life, a god that had become an idol in his life.

And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. Mark 10:21–22 (ESV)

Jesus said, "You want to do one thing to be part of my kingdom? Sell all your stuff and follow me." The young man wouldn't do it. What was the other god in his life? You guessed it. It was his money, his position and success. They were more important than the one thing Jesus told him he could do to inherit eternal life. The implication is that this man's wealth was his first love. His love for his money had become the true god he worshipped. Cash was his idol.

Now we might wonder, what about us? Does Jesus want us to sell all our stuff and follow him? Does selling all our stuff to follow Jesus guarantee us the kingdom of heaven? No, it doesn't. God probably doesn't want you selling all your stuff to follow him. There is no place in the Bible where Christians are commanded to go into voluntary poverty to follow Jesus. Jesus did not quote Scripture to this rich young man and say, "the law says give away all your money to be part of the kingdom." It just doesn't say that anywhere. Jesus was going after this particular man's attitude toward his money. Remember the man claimed he had never broken any of the Ten Commandments, but the truth was he was breaking the first and second commandment. Money was his god. It was the idol in his life. That is why Jesus told this man to sell all his stuff.

When Jesus talked to rich Zacchaeus and Zacchaeus trusted in Christ, Zacchaeus gave away half his possessions to the poor, but that was done voluntarily, not because Jesus commanded him to do it. Later, Jesus talked to Nicodemus, who was also wealthy. Jesus didn't even bring up the subject of money with him. Apparently money wasn't his god, so Jesus had no need to point that out in his life. Later, Joseph of Arimathea would follow Jesus. He was also a wealthy man but we don't hear anything about him feeling compelled to give away his life savings. The Gospel of Luke tells us Jesus and his disciples were supported in their ministry by many prominent women who provided for them from their own means. Jesus didn't tell any of those women they needed to sell all their possessions to be followers of him.

When Jesus told this man to sell all his possessions and follow him it was because Jesus was trying to show this particular man that he wasn't as good as he thought he was. He was violating the first commandment and worshipping another God, the god of his wealth.

We don't know, but if the man had agreed to give away all of his possessions and follow Jesus, it wouldn't surprise me if Jesus would have treated that situation like God did when he called Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac on Mt. Moriah. When Isaac was bound and the knife was in Abraham's hand ready to descend upon his own son, God stopped him and said, "Now I know that you will trust me." If the man had agreed to give away all his wealth, Jesus might have said, "Now I know that you love me more than your money. You can keep your money."

The point is that money can subtly become the god we worship, just like this rich young ruler. It can become what we love rather than Jesus. It can become our identity instead of Jesus. How do we know if money is becoming the true God in our hearts? Here are a few diagnostic questions.

1. **Do I find myself envying those who have more than me?** Am I content with my life or am I constantly envying what other people have? This can come from the power of advertising or it can come from comparing ourselves to others. When people in your age group purchase a larger house, do you feel you need to have a larger house to keep up with them? When people in your age group get a new car or a new boat, do you feel you need a new car or new boat because they have one? Can you be content with what God has

provided? Each of us must remember that God will give us everything we need to accomplish his will for our lives. If God doesn't provide something, it means we don't need it to accomplish his will for our lives in that moment. Be content with what God has provided. It is everything we need to please him in that moment.

2. **Am I a spender or a miser?** Either of these can indicate money has become a rival god in our lives. The spender can't save money because he loves to spend money. He never looks ahead and plans for the future. He never saves for the future. He lives in the economic present. He can't stand budgeting. Money is his idol so he spends it as fast as he makes it. The miser can also have money as his god. Scrooge from the Christmas story is the miser's favorite superhero. The bigger the number in the bank, the more secure he feels in his life. Misers feel no need to be generous toward others because they are worshipping money, so they hoard rather than give.
3. **Am I a giver and a tither?** I realize some of us are literally living hand-to-mouth. I am not trying to knock on the poor because some people have nothing. That doesn't change the fact that the best way to break the idol of money is to give away money. Giving away money as our tithe in church is one of the best ways to shatter the grip of money in your life. Giving away money to a family or individual that is less fortunate than you to help them in their time of need is a great way to bring joy and blessing to their life. If you are not a tither and a giver, chances are, money is your rival god.

So we find that money can be a very subtle and powerful idol in our lives. Money can subtly become the god we worship in our universe instead of worshipping the true God of the universe. A shift to worshipping money can happen very subtly under our noses, just like it did for this rich young ruler. The Bible says the rich young ruler went away with great sorrow because he had great possessions and refused to let go of them. Imagine that. He could have been the 13th disciple. He traded becoming part of the kingdom and the 13th disciple for the cheap earthly reward of keeping his money.

Money is more of a spiritual liability than an asset.

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!” Mark 10:23 (ESV)

Jesus’ words about the difficulty of the rich entering the kingdom of heaven seem obvious to us. The reason these words seem obvious is because we read them with the benefit of having the rest of the New Testament in our hands. In a moment, we will see why it is so important to read these words of Jesus in their historical context if we are going to understand them. For now, let’s see a few reasons why wealth is more of a spiritual liability than an asset when it comes to our relationships with Jesus.

The points I am about to make are not necessarily true for all people who are rich, but they are difficult challenges that everyone who is rich must face.

- 1. It is easy for those who are rich to live with a false sense of security about the future.** Those who are rich lack desperation. They don’t have to pray for things when they can just pay for things. It is easy to become conceited when you are rich. It is easy to feel confident in your own ability

because your riches inflate your view of yourself. When you don't need resources beyond yourself, you don't turn to God in prayer looking for resources beyond yourself. It is hard for the rich to live for heaven when they have everything they want on earth. I am not faulting anyone who is rich. I am just stating the facts. When people have plenty of money to meet all their needs plus wants it is easy to live like this life is all there is and not to think of eternal things when we have so many earthly things. Paul warned about this.

As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. 1 Timothy 6:17 (ESV)

2. **It is easy for the rich to be bound to this world.** Matthew 6:21 says where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. If you have a lot of money, there is a lot to care about. Having a lot of money is not easy work. There are investments, taxes, a lot of stuff to care for and worry about. It is easy to have all your thoughts about this life and forget that this life is not the main event. This life is just a set up for the next life. It is easy to become like the rich fool in Luke 12:16-21 who kept building bigger and bigger barns thinking he would live forever in this world when in reality his life was taken to the next world that very night and his treasure left behind.
3. **It is easy for the rich to become selfish.** Those who are not rich work to survive. Those who are rich often focus on self-fulfillment and pleasure. They focus on self-gratification. They do what they do to elevate their ease in life, not to survive in life. The problem with that is that it is easy to develop a pattern of self-indulgence. It is easy to have your life become focused on serving yourself and your wants rather than serving others.

As I said, not all who are rich fall prey to these challenges. We just need to recognize these as particularly difficult challenges that the rich face, which can make wealth more of a spiritual liability than a spiritual asset.

While from the perspective of the New Testament, we can see how wealth can easily become a spiritual liability, in the first century context that Jesus lived, they thought of wealth the exact opposite way. They considered wealth in a godly person's life a spiritual asset. If you were seen as a godly person, like the rich young man in our story, they saw wealth as concrete evidence that God was pleased with your life. If you were poor, they figured that was concrete evidence that there was something displeasing to God about your life. In Jesus' day, the average Jew believed an early version of the prosperity gospel. They justified this from the Old Testament.

In the Old Testament, when God was pleased with his people, they were blessed in the land. When God was not pleased with his people, they suffered drought or were conquered and taken into exile. In Jesus' day the rich young ruler would have been considered one of the most godly men around. He was the ruler of his synagogue. He claimed he never broken any of the Ten Commandments. He was rich, which they believed was concrete evidence that God was pleased with his life. They would bolster their prosperity theology view by quoting verses like this from the Psalms.

Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways! You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands; you shall be blessed, and it shall be well with you. Psalm 128:1–2 (ESV)

If you were healthy, they figured you did something right because they thought God protected you from sickness. If you were sick, they figured you did

something wrong and were being punished by God with suffering. To show you how this “you are suffering because you sinned” theology permeated the world of Jesus, look at how the disciples reacted to the man born blind.

And his disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” John 9:2 (ESV)

Jesus answered this by saying, “Neither! This man was born blind to give God glory.” They thought he was born blind as a direct result of someone’s sin. We see this same prosperity theology theme in the story of Job. In the Old Testament story of Job, Job was a very godly man and a very blessed man. He was extremely wealthy. Satan challenged God to take away Job’s blessing to see if Job would still worship God. God allowed Satan to take away Job’s health and wealth. When Job’s life fell apart, his friends consistently told him the reason he was suffering because he did something wrong and God was punishing him for his sin. They told Job that if he would just identify his sin and confess his sin, his prosperity would return. While sometimes people suffer because of sin, from the book of Job we know that his suffering was not because of sin.

So when the disciples looked at the rich young ruler, who was a godly man because he was the leader of his synagogue, and who was a rich man, which they considered evidence of God’s pleasure with his life, they thought of him as the most likely person to be in the kingdom of God. In fact, they thought of the rich young ruler as the kind of person who would lead the way into the kingdom of God. Everyone else would come after people like him.

So when Jesus said it is hard for a godly rich man, like the rich young ruler, to enter the kingdom of heaven, this turned the disciples’ world view upside

down. They didn't get it. It was shocking. They thought a wealthy, godly man like the rich young ruler was God's favorite. This complete inversion of everything the disciples understood in relationship to wealth and godliness is seen in the next thing that happens in the text.

And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." Mark 10:24–25 (ESV)

If it is difficult for a godly rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven, then nobody else has a chance!

Then Jesus explained how hard it is for a wealthy, godly person to enter the kingdom of heaven. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.

Putting a camel through the eye of a needle is not an expression that is unique to Jesus. It was used in the ancient world to describe something that was impossible. This saying was so commonly used, it is even found in Babylonian literature, except they changed it slightly. They described something that was impossible as putting an elephant through the eye of a needle. Why the change of animals? In Babylon, the largest animal they had was the elephant. In Israel they didn't have elephants. The largest animal they had was the camel.

So Jesus said a godly, rich man getting himself to heaven by something he does is as impossible as putting a camel through a needle. It is just not happening. It is even more impossible than licking your own elbow.

The rich young man asked what he could do to be part of the kingdom of heaven because he thought of himself as a really good person compared to

others. Jesus said there is nothing you can do. Doing something to get ourselves to heaven is as impossible as putting a camel through the eye of a needle, even for an extremely godly man like the rich, young ruler.

Before we leave this portion of your text, I need to address some bad theology some of you were probably taught. Some Bible students talk about a gate in the city of Jerusalem called the needle gate. They say this was a small opening in the city wall that camels could use. If they unburdened themselves from the luggage they carried and got down on their knees, camels could shimmy themselves into the city. Some Bible students claim the point of this passage is to tell rich people to unburden themselves from their wealth and then they can squeeze into the kingdom.

I have to tell you that interpretation just isn't true. There is zero historical evidence that at the time of Christ there was a small gate in the wall of the city of Jerusalem called the needle's gate that was used by camels. In fact that explanation of this text doesn't show up until the 11th century by a Byzantine commentator. That is more than a thousand years after the time of Christ. All the historical evidence points to the fact that putting a camel through the eye of a needle was a common way of describing something that was impossible to do.

So Jesus disassembled the disciples' entire world view about the way they understood wealth. Rather than a godly, rich person being a sign of God's favor, meaning they were the most likely to be in the kingdom, Jesus said that no matter how godly a person or how rich a person, it is completely impossible for him or her to earn his or her way into the kingdom of heaven. It is like stuffing a

camel through the eye of a needle. These shocking words from Jesus explain the shocked response of the disciples.

And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to him, “Then who can be saved?” Mark 10:26 (ESV)

Yikes! You mean the rich who keeps the commandments perfectly can't be saved? If there is not hope for him, there is no hope for anybody! Here comes the good news.

God can do the impossible.

Jesus looked at them and said, “With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God.” Mark 10:27 (ESV)

The bottom line is we can't save ourselves any more than a camel can get himself through the eye of a needle. The good news is God can do what is impossible for us to do. That is why Jesus came. He came to die on the cross for our sin. He came to rise from the dead to new life and to offer complete forgiveness of sin and new life to each one of us. There is nothing we need to do to obtain it. All we need to do is trust in what Jesus has done, and it is all given to us as a gift.

This brings us back to where we were two weeks ago with the verses just before this story where Jesus said this about children and the kingdom of God.

Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it. Mark 10:15 (ESV)

How does a child approach his or her parents? She doesn't try to buy her parents' love. He knows there is nothing he can do to deserve his parents' love. She just places her simple trust and faith in her parents and her parents' love her to care for her and save her. My friends, that is the only way to enter the kingdom

of God. It is not by trying to do something to earn it like the rich young ruler. It is by trusting in what Jesus has done for us. What is impossible for us to accomplish was not impossible for God to accomplish. He made a way for us to be part of the kingdom.

Paul summarized how to be part of the kingdom in his letter to the Ephesians.

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. Ephesians 2:8–9 (ESV)

So it is impossible for us to save ourselves, even if we are the most godly people on the planet. Trying to save ourselves is as impossible as pushing a camel through the eye of a needle. The good news is that what is impossible for us is possible with God through Jesus his son.

Would you rather be in the shoes of Peter or the rich young ruler?

Peter began to say to him, “See, we have left everything and followed you.” Mark 10:28 (ESV)

Peter was scratching his head and thinking about this. He said, “Wait a minute. You told the rich guy to sell all his stuff and follow you. He wouldn’t do it but we did it. Jesus, we left everything to follow you. We left our businesses, our families, our homes. We don’t even have a cell phone. We can’t even text. We left our boats and our nets all to follow you. What is in it for us?”

Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life.” Mark 10:29–30 (ESV)

Jesus said to Peter, “Whose shoes would you rather be wearing?” The young ruler was rich. He kept his stuff but he forfeited life with Jesus. He forfeited the greater family of the church and forfeited eternal life all to keep his money and stuff. Peter left behind his family, his house, and his stuff, but look what he gained. He gained life with Jesus. He gained a much greater family called the church. He gained eternal life and being part of the kingdom.

Whose shoes would you rather be in — the super rich guy who didn’t have Jesus and eternal life or Peter, who no longer had his stuff but he had Jesus, he had the church, and he had eternal life? I think Peter got the better end of the deal.

Do you know what this means? It means that if you know Jesus and you are part of the church, you are in a better position today than Mark Zuckerberg and Tim Cook. They have lots of earthly wealth but don’t have true wealth and eternal life. This is why Jesus finished by saying how there will be a great reversal in eternity.

But many who are first will be last, and the last first. Mark 10:31 (ESV)

Conclusion

What did we learn this morning?

1. **Money is a subtle and powerful idol that is easy to worship instead of God.** We can be just like the rich young man and look spiritually good on the outside but be living for money on the inside.
2. **Wealth is more of a spiritual liability than an asset.** The people in Jesus’ day thought wealth was evidence of God’s blessing which left you thinking

you were the most likely to be in the kingdom. Jesus reframed money as a rival god that we can easily find ourselves serving instead of him.

3. **A godly person trying to save himself or herself is as impossible as putting a camel through the eye of a needle.**
4. **All things are possible with God.** God is the only who who can do the impossible and get us into the kingdom of God. We can't do anything to get ourselves in. All we can do is place simple childlike trust in Jesus to forgive our sin and make us a part of God's kingdom.
5. **It is better to be in the shoes of Peter, who left his riches and gained Jesus, than in the shoes of the rich young ruler, who kept his riches but lost Jesus.**

Getting ourselves into the kingdom is as impossible as stuffing a camel through the eye of a needle. Thankfully, we have a God who does the impossible. All who place simple, childlike faith and trust in Jesus will be part of the kingdom because of what Jesus did, not because of what they do.



Dr. Kurt Trucksess is ordained in the Evangelical Free Church of America. He enjoys reading, writing, and time with his family. Feel free to contact him at www.Christ2RCulture.com (www.c2rc.com)

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