

October 20, 2024  
Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost  
St. Timothy Lutheran Church – Huber Heights, OH  
Pastor Joel Sutton

Mark 10:23-31 (Ecclesiastes 5:10-20; Hebrews 4:1-13)

GOD DOES THE IMPOSSIBLE BY MAKING YOU WEALTHY UNTO ETERNAL LIFE.

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

In our Gospel text this morning, St. Mark records that:

*“... Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!”<sup>24</sup> 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!”* (Mark 10:23–24)

In the original language, the word Jesus uses for *wealth* in our text, is a generic term for anything that has monetary value: money, possessions, assets, goods, and property. (cf: TDNT, 480) I don't know what tax bracket you are in, but compared to people living in other parts of the world, you are *wealthy*. I am *wealthy*. And Jesus Word to you this morning is – it's difficult *“for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!”* This is the Gospel of the Lord. Praise to You, O Christ!

Yes, praise to You, O Christ, for revealing this to us... for teaching us that our natural sinful desire is inclined to love our *wealth*. Our sinful inclination is to accumulate as much *wealth* as we can – then lock up that *wealth* in our hearts and never let it go. That's how sinners are programmed. That's how you and I are programmed. But before you despair, please know that Jesus is not condemning *wealth* in our text. Your possessions are a great blessing from God. All that you have and all that you are – is a blessing and gift from God. Jesus isn't telling you to examine how much *wealth* you have accumulated – but to examine what role does your *wealth* play in your life? He's asking you: *“What is it – or who is it that you trust to get you through this life and into life eternal?”*

Our Gospel text is a continuation of last week's text where the rich young man came to Jesus asking what he must do to inherit eternal life. (cf: Mark 10:17–22) He's a self-made man who believes that nothing is out of his reach with a little sweat and elbow grease. However, he misunderstands how one receives an inheritance. You don't work... you don't **do** anything to receive an inheritance. An inheritance is not *earned*. An inheritance is *given*. You inherit because of the work that someone else has done – and – they graciously named you as an heir. Because you are an heir – you are eligible to receive an inheritance.

Jesus tells the man to keep the Second Table of the Ten Commandments, focusing him on his relationship with his neighbor. These are the commandments that most people believe they can keep with little effort. But when staring into the mirror of God's Law, the man was blinded by

his own self-righteousness. He was confident that he'd kept all these commandments from his youth. And yet, he knew that something was lacking. He felt he needed to do something more.

Jesus knew the man's heart. So, in love and compassion, Jesus addresses man's greatest weakness – the First Commandment. He didn't fear, love, and trust in God above all things because he loved his *wealth* more than he loved God. He was devoted to a false god. His possessions possessed him. He was devoted to his *wealth*. Jesus lovingly told him to sell everything, give it to the poor, and follow Him – *and then* – he would have treasure in heaven. But the man went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. The man who has everything lacks the one thing necessary. (cf. Luke 10:42) The gift of trusting *in* and clinging *to* Jesus, and following Him instead of trusting *in* and clinging *to* his possession.

Even though Jesus loved the man and had compassion on him, He doesn't force Himself on the man. The man went away sorrowful, secure in his sin. Jesus loves and has compassion on all mankind – but He forces no one to repent and follow Him. Many go away, secure in their sin. And that brings us to today's Gospel reading. Jesus loved the man and didn't pursue him *but* began teaching His disciples saying:

***“How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!”*** (Mark 10:23)

The disciples were amazed at Jesus' words. In their culture, *wealth* was thought of as a sign of favor with God. God had blessed both Abraham and his nephew Lot with *wealth*. (cf: Genesis 13:2–6) Job was blameless, upright, and the *wealthiest* man in the East. (cf: Job 1:1–3) And since King Solomon asked God for wisdom instead of *wealth*, God blessed him with both wisdom and *wealth*. (cf: 1 Kings 3:5–15)

Solomon was, and still is, arguably, the *wealthiest* man to ever walk the face of the earth. Yet giving in to his sinful human nature, Solomon turned his heart away from the Lord God. He took many foreign wives – wives who turned his heart from the One true God to follow after false gods – even building them places of idol sacrifice and worship. (cf: 1 Kgs 11:1–8) There is no biblical record that Solomon ever repented of his sin; however, some scholars suggest that Solomon's Book of Ecclesiastes reveals his recognition of his sinful decisions. In our Old Testament reading this morning we hear where he wrote:

***“He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity.”*** (Ecclesiastes 5:10)

Solomon is talking from experience. He knows that having riches does not equate to a happy and leisurely life. As a matter of fact, he learned that *wealth* leads to a hectic and even chaotic life. Material possessions require maintenance. Financial holdings require protection, for everyone wants a piece of your financial pie. The rich man toils from sun-up to sun-down attempting to acquire a little more *wealth*. At night, he can't sleep because he's worrying about saving and protecting his pile of money. Those who're possessed by their *wealth* and possessions are toiling for the wind. (cf: Ecclesiastes 5:16)

On the other hand, Solomon says:

***“Sweet is the sleep of a laborer...”*** (Ecclesiastes 5:12)

The laborer has neither possessions nor *wealth*, and he sleeps like a baby without a worry in the world. He has nothing to lose. And the fact remains that whether you're rich or poor, when you breathe your last breath, all your stuff... everything you have accumulated in this life is going to disappear. Naked you came from your mother's womb, and naked you'll return. (cf: Job 1:21)

I need to be clear – as I said earlier, Jesus isn't condemning *wealth* and *riches*. Your possessions are a great blessing from God, but unfortunately, like the rich young man, sometimes your possessions – possess you. Instead of placing your love and trust in the provision and protection of the One true God, you and I place our confidence in our possessions. Instead of using your *wealth* to love and serve your neighbor, or to support the ongoing proclamation of the Gospel, you cling to your pile of money as if it'll never perish.

To ensure the disciples get the point, Jesus repeats Himself, first saying:

***“How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!”*** (Mark 10:23)

Then again:

***“Children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God!”*** (Mk 10:24)

And it dumbfounds His disciples. They ask:

***“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.’*** (Mark 10:26–27)

Notice here, Jesus is no longer talking about money and riches. The disciples asked: ***“Who can be saved.”*** Jesus' answered: ***“With man it is impossible.”*** Man cannot cooperate one bit in his salvation. Not by your good works and deeds... not with your *riches*, your good looks, or your dazzling personality. They're nothing but filthy rags. (cf: Isaiah 64:6) Because of mankind's sinful nature, you are dead in your trespasses. You are not only unable to enter the kingdom of heaven, you can't even believe in Jesus Christ your Lord. It takes a miracle believe. It takes a miracle to enter the kingdom of God. It's impossible for you. But all things are possible with God.

Jesus calls His disciples children. He's calling them – and you and I – to see how helpless we are. Since it's impossible for you to enter the kingdom of God, God Himself did the impossible on your behalf. The virgin Mary conceived by the Holy Spirit and Jesus became man. The natural man cannot keep God's Commandments perfectly as God demands, so Jesus did what is impossible for man – fulfilling all the Law and Prophets. Seeking to save the lost, He lived as Servant to all, and died a criminal's death upon the cross. The devil thought he had defeated Jesus as He was laid in the tomb, but three days later, God did the impossible and raised Him from the dead. In Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, what is impossible for you – Jesus has done on your behalf. He has become the mediator between God and all humanity, becoming your substitute.

God continues to do the impossible as you heard in our epistle text this morning where the writer to the Hebrews says:

***“For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”*** (Hebrews 4:12)

It’s one thing to memorize that verse – but it’s quite another to trust and believe it. God’s Word is alive and remains alive forever. It does the impossible. It always accomplishes what God sends it to accomplish. (cf: Isaiah 55:11) All of your good works, moralism, and piety contributes absolutely nothing toward your salvation. A sharp sword can cut through flesh and bone. But God’s Word alone divides soul and spirit, cutting through spiritual barriers that stand between God and mankind. It cuts to the innermost parts... discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart... exposing your heart’s true desire... calling you to repentance and faith, enlightening you with His gifts, sanctifying and keeping you in the true faith, making you an heir of His heavenly kingdom.

Every bit of your salvation is a miracle performed by God, given you because you are an heir. (cf: 1 Peter 1:3–5) As an heir of the kingdom, you are among the ***wealthiest*** people on the face of the earth because God does the impossible for you. It’s no more impossible for Him to save a self-righteous ***rich*** man than to save a self-righteous ***poor*** man. God owes you nothing and yet gives you everything. As His precious child, He has given you a hundredfold now in this time, and in the age to come... eternal life. He has given you priceless ***wealth***, bought and paid for by Jesus precious blood and His innocent suffering and death.

Nothing is impossible with God. He has opened the kingdom of heaven to all who believe in His only Son, Christ Jesus who accomplished salvation on your behalf and has reconciled you with the Father. You have His promise. For the sake of Jesus, You will enter His eternal rest. (cf: Hebrews 4:1)

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understand, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus,  
Amen.