

Impossible is Possible!

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Riches; Possible; Jesus; Idolatry / Mark 10:23–31

That the hearers would rest in the comfort that Jesus makes the impossible, possible.

- › Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Introduction

In about a month we will be celebrating Thanksgiving, in two months we will be close to celebrating Christmas. I really do not like this time of year. It's not only because of the snow, wind, and cold. It's because of the focus of our lives. I even get caught up in it. The material side of Thanksgiving and Christmas. On Thanksgiving we overeat! In Advent and Christmas, we focus almost solely on the material side of the holiday, the giving and the receiving of gifts. Our focus is not on Jesus.

Impossibility

Frankly, it's not just a holiday problem, it's an issue you and I face throughout the year. It's an issue that Jesus speaks to today. Last week, he spoke to the heart of the issue in the Rich Young Man. His idol was his wealth and possessions. Jesus speaks to our hearts as well. Today, Jesus opens up to his disciples and focuses on those who see their wealth and possessions as their idol.

English Standard Version Chapter 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!"

Now when we think about riches...it's often the case that money can get us through life. Many see money as security in life. Many see money as a way to do good by themselves. Many see money as a way to get out of trouble. Many see money as a way to wine and dine in life. Or as the man who built bigger barns did, "Eat, drink, and be merry." Oftentimes, when riches and wealth come into play, it destroys marriages and destroys churches. Riches and wealth, and the use of it, can even prevent you from entering the kingdom of God. This happens because

those that put their trust in their wealth and riches are not trusting in God alone. They are forgetting that it is God alone who preserves them in both body and soul. Their priorities are in the wrong place!

The disciples were amazed at his words! Why? Maybe they didn't see it...or they weren't understanding him clearly. And then Jesus said to them again:

English Standard Version Chapter 10

“Children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God! 25 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.”

Not just the wealthy at this point, but for all people it is difficult to enter the kingdom of God. You see, we each have our own idols. You have them, I have them. And these idols make it impossible to enter the kingdom of God. It's these idols that we have that give us mixed-up priorities. It is here where yes it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of the needle. We hear Jesus say that and we think. WOW, now that's impossible.

Jesus is telling them...he's telling us. Man cannot save himself. Neither the rich young man, nor the disciples...nor you and I. No matter how hard we try, we can't do it. That's precisely the question the disciples asked, “Then who can be saved?” And Jesus said, “With man it's impossible...” You can't do it on your own.

Your riches can't save you. Leaving everything behind can't save you. Your own idols can't save you. Whether those idols be that of money, power, sex, alcohol, family, friends, school, sports, work, community, church (yes the church can be an idol). These all give us mixed up priorities.

I think of where our society is today. The focus is off the church, it's off of anything religious. It's focused on the self...and what you think you need. Perhaps you think you need more. Perhaps you think the right thing for your child is to be gone every weekend for some sort of athletic event or other competition. Our priorities are mixed up.

And the thing is the first will be last with mixed up priorities. Judas Iscariot, his idol was 30 pieces of silver. The Pharisees and other leaders of the church of Jesus day had idols of their own, the idol was the law, following the letter of the law. Their idol was doing things to get to heaven. The High Priests that wanted to crucify Jesus had their idols in their positions of leadership, power, and authority. When our mixed-up priorities are there, when our idols are reigning we will be last. We will be outside of the kingdom of God!

It's impossible by ourselves to enter the kingdom of God. But for Jesus it's not!

Possible

“For all things are possible with God.” Jesus proclaims to his disciples. He points to the cross! He points to what makes all things possible. Jesus opens heaven’s gates for you. Jesus points to the cross, the culmination of making all things possible. These words of Jesus shift the focus from us to the mediator, to Jesus, the author and perfecter of our lives. Jesus in the very next verses after our text again points to the cross, his passion, death, and resurrection. Jesus points to what frees not just the disciples, but you and me as well. Jesus is the only way to your reward. You see, God can move the hearts of mankind who are focused on wealth, riches, and other idols and mixed up priorities to be focused solely on Jesus. God can move the hearts of idolaters to rest on God. That’s the Gospel of Jesus Christ. That’s the power God has...he can make the impossible possible! And he does it . He saves you!

But yet, Peter still didn’t get it! “See, we have left everything and followed you.” He didn’t get it! Peter...it’s not what you do. It’s not what you have done that saves you. It’s not leaving behind your boat and nets that saved you. Peter, I saved you. Peter, I am going to die for you so that you may have life.

And it is then that Jesus points to the gracious gifts in this life and the life to come. Gracious gifts that come to them and to you and me! These are comforting words for you and me!

These are comforting words for a such a time as this! In your life that is given to you in Jesus Christ, where he makes you one of His Children through His Cross and Resurrection, he gives you promises...promises of your reward in the age to come - your eternal life with Christ! It is in Christ that you have riches. It is in Christ that your priorities are set straight. It is in Christ that you have hope.

It is in Christ that you endure. It is in Christ, that even when things seem impossible in life. When persecution comes, it seems like the impossible, but Jesus Christ is with you. It is in him, for the gospel’s sake that you endure. Because you are Christ’s...there may come times where you might have to leave home, to leave home where flesh and blood relatives don’t acknowledge Jesus or even ridicule you. Persecutions may soon become even more violent in our day and our country. They may soon put you in choice...earthly life or spiritual life. Through all of this you will endure, because you are Christ’s. And because you are Christ’s you who are last will be first. You might soon be rejected by the world...and maybe you are now. But the thing is you are Christ’s...and Christ will never reject you.

Jesus Christ tells us that the riches of the world...no matter if they are monetary riches, riches of possession or even riches of fame, popularity, prestige, rank...aren’t what matters. What matters is that you are rich in Christ.

The Riches of the Rich Young man got in the way of Jesus..he just couldn’t get around the fact that they were preventing him from Jesus. But not all the rich end this way...Think about such people as these cloud of witnesses - Abraham, David, Zaccheus, Cornelius who was a Roman Centurion, and Lydia to name of few.

There was a difference dear Saints! The difference is that by God's grace they who perhaps at one point were controlled by riches, were changed and they used their riches and themselves in service to their neighbor and Christ for the sake of the Gospel. And yes, there are many more today, some even here in our midst, who set aside their selfishness to use the gifts God has given them for the betterment of the kingdom.

Jesus Christ has made the difference in your life. Yes, the reality is still there, we still fight the impossible, we still fight with our priorities. We still do the things we know we shouldn't. We still allow the "riches" of this life to get in the way of Jesus doing His salvific work in our lives. But the thing is you have been redeemed...you were washed clean in baptism. You were chosen by Christ to be one of his...he said to you, "Come, follow me," and you have. You follow him, not perfectly, because you can't...that's impossible...but God makes it possible...he makes it possible through the faith given to you in Christ Jesus our Lord. Remember, with Christ...he makes the impossible possible. And I guess, since he does that...he could make it be where a camel does go through the eye of the needle. But really, that's a moot point...You have the kingdom of God, you have the riches of forgiveness, life, and salvation. You are Christ's! You are first!

In Jesus Name. Amen.

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