

21<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Pentecost      10/17/21  
Mark 10:23-31                      24B

## AND THE DISCIPLES WERE AMAZED AT HIS WORDS.

As Jesus was setting out on His journey to the cross, a man ran up to Him, knelt before Him, and asked Him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life” (Mk 10:17). Jesus holds before him the 2<sup>nd</sup> Table of the Law, and he boasts “All these I have kept from my youth” (v. 20). Jesus looked at him and said, “You lack one thing; go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven” (v. 21). The man was disheartened by the words of Jesus, and went away sad because he had great possessions.

That was our lesson last Sunday. Then begins our lesson this Sunday. As that man walked off into the sunset, Jesus turned to His disciples and said, “How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God” (v. 23). When the disciples heard that, they were amazed that Jesus would say such a thing. And for good reason. Back in those days, wealth was seen as having favor with God. Besides that, the Bible is filled with people who had great wealth, and entered the kingdom of God.

Exhibit A: Abraham. He had vast herds of livestock and silver and gold. And then you have Job, who possessed 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 pairs of oxen, 500 female donkeys, and a whole host of servants. He’s known as one of the richest men in the east. And we get to the New Testament and meet Lydia. Lydia was a dealer of purple cloth. Back in those days, purple cloth was super expensive. And the fact that she dealt in it meant she was like uber-rich.

So, you have Abraham, Job, and Lydia, people with tons of money and tons of possessions, and they're getting into the kingdom of God. But not so this guy on his knees before Jesus. He goes away sad, not having eternal life.

And he's not alone. Jesus tells us about a rich man who dressed in purple and fine linens every day and feasted scrumptiously. He took care of himself, but at his gate was the beggar Lazarus covered with sores and dogs would come and lick his sores. The man cared more about his wealth and possessions than God and helping his neighbor. He died and went to Hades, and wanted Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in cool water to cool his thirst because he was in torment in the flames.

And Jesus tells us about the rich man whose land yielded a bumper crop. He looked it over and said, "Oh, poor me. I have no where to store all my crop. Whatever should I do?" So, he tears down his barns and builds bigger ones and says, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry." But God said to him, "Fool! This night your soul required of you" ... "So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God" (Lk 12:19-21).

Amazing, isn't it? Abraham, Job, and Lydia have wealth and possessions and they make it into the kingdom of God. The guy on his knees before Jesus, the rich man who ignored Lazarus, the rich man with the bumper crop have wealth and possessions and they don't make it in. Confusing. Even more confusing when Jesus says, "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 (vv. 24-25).

You have the rich young man kneeling before Jesus, the rich man in purple clothes and fine linen, the rich man whose land yielded a bumper crop, and they do not enter the kingdom of God. And Jesus says it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.

But, Abraham did it. Job made it. Lydia made it. And they're wealthy. So, how does that happen? You ponder that, and you find yourself asking the same question the disciples asked, "Then who can be saved" (v. 26)?

There's a good reason you ask that question. You, by nature, are rich. And you say to that, "Come on, Pastor, I'm not rich. I'm a poor guy. I have a mortgage. I have to buy food and medicine. I have kids in college. I have credit card bills through the roof."

We don't think of ourselves as "rich," but we are. We all have things that are precious to us and that we cling to as did the rich young man who knelt before Jesus – money, retirement fund, family, career, what people think of us. We are "rich," because we fear, love, and trust in them more than in Jesus.

Who then can be saved? That's what you're thinking right now. It's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for you to enter the kingdom of God. If that's what you're thinking, you are about to be amazed, because Jesus says to you what He said to His disciples, "With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God" (v. 27).

The Good News for you, Dear Child of God, is that Jesus does the impossible for you because He is God. And what Jesus does is get poor for you. What I mean by that is that He gets poor for you by taking away

from you all your greed, all your idolatry, and all your arrogance. That's what He did for the man who knelt before Him, that's what He did for the rich man who ignored Lazarus, that's what He did for the rich man with a bumper crop; and for Abraham, Job, Lydia, and for all people of all times and all places. Jesus takes upon Himself the sin of all the world and carries them to the cross. There, from His head, His hands, His feet, His side flows the blood of Jesus Christ.

And what does that blood do? It cleanses us from all sin. It washes away your greediness; it washes away your idolatry; it washes away your arrogance, so that you can fit through the eye of the needle and into the kingdom of God. It's impossible for you; but it's completely possible because of what God has done for you in Christ Jesus. Christ has died and Christ has risen and your sins are forgiven.

You fit into the kingdom of God. You passed through the eye of the needle because you were brought to the font of Holy Baptism, where you were washed and brought into the kingdom of God.

And that cleansing flood does something else for you – It allows you to live a Christian life, walking by faith; fearing, loving, and trusting in God above all things. Here's what I mean by that. Abraham, Job, Lydia and you – you – have great possessions. You have things in your life are great and wonderful and important. But, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ puts all of them into their proper perspective. You have money in the bank, a retirement fund, a house, home, family, goods, the daily bread that God has given to you. But, that daily bread -- that's not a god to be worshipped. That's a gift **from** God, to be used to His glory and the good of my neighbor.

That's living as a Christian steward. It's all possible because of Jesus Christ. He shed His blood to cleanse you of your sin; for you, brought you into His kingdom in Holy Baptism, and has given you a new life.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.