

Daily Discipleship

Sunday, October 9-15 (B) – Mark 10:17-31

Living in Christ: *Sacrifice*

Focus Question: *What am I willing to sacrifice to follow Jesus?*

word of life

“You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” Mark 10:21 (NRSV)

Read Mark 10:17-31

As Jesus travels, many people come to him for healing or teaching. Thus, it is not difficult to imagine a man running toward Jesus and kneeling before him. This man’s question is fundamental and sincere, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” (Mark 10:17 NRSV)

1. *What do you surmise from the title “good Teacher?”*
2. *How might have the man expected Jesus to answer?*

Jesus responds to the question by referring to the commandments, but this is not new information. All these laws were familiar to the devout man kneeling in front of Jesus. This disciple is ready to move to a deeper level. Jesus looks at him, loves him, and speaks candidly. Jesus asks the man to sell everything and give money to the poor. These words send the rich man away in grief and shock. He cannot comply because he has too much.

3. *If Jesus loved the man, why not give him an easier answer?*
4. *How does the answer of Jesus reflect love?*
5. *How might giving away his possessions have helped this man?*

Jesus turns his attention to his disciples and the topic of wealth. Those with riches will have a difficult time with the sacrificial nature of faith. His illustration is of a camel being threaded through the eye of a needle. The absurdity of the image is striking. The disciples are as shocked as the rich man who knelt at the feet of Jesus. Who has a chance of ever being saved?

6. *What is your reaction to Jesus’ teaching on wealth?*
7. *Was Jesus serious about those with wealth?*
8. *What does wealth have to do with salvation?*

Jesus puts it all in perspective. It is unfortunate the rich man has already departed and does not hear the final words about eternal life. Ultimately, there is nothing anyone can do to earn salvation and eternal life. No matter how hard a person tries to get a camel, elephant, dog or cat through the eye of a needle, it is not going to happen. Eternal life is about God’s actions, not human. “For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible.” (Mark 10:27 NRSV)

9. *Does this mean the rich man does not need to give away his possessions?*
10. *Is this hope for a rich person who cannot give away their possessions?*
11. *What is the message for the poor?*

Peter takes all of the words of Jesus to heart. His concern is a personal one. What about himself and some of the disciples who left their wives, jobs, and homes in order to follow Jesus? Is this what Jesus is talking about? Jesus affirms anyone who sacrifices for Jesus or for the good news.

12. *What is the main message of Jesus?*

word among us

The pastor's sermon focused on the trappings of wealth for those who want to follow Jesus. It was a longer sermon than usual because the congregation was quite wealthy. Afterward, an older, distinguished man stopped to shake the pastor's hand as he was leaving the church. He stared long and hard at the pastor and said, "Preacher, why don't you start making disciples and stop talking about money."

1. *How might the preacher have responded to him?*
2. *Give other examples when Jesus mentioned money.*
3. *What is the connection between discipleship and money?*

Later that day, the same pastor spent time with the confirmation class instructing on tithing. The youth looked at the pastor with disbelief as they learned about the privilege of giving. They were a bright group so it was easy for them to figure out a tithe (10%) of their babysitting and mowing monies. They wanted to know if people actually tithed their income.

4. *Is tithing practiced by your congregation?*
5. *What are the spiritual benefits of putting aside the first fruits for God?*

In some congregations, people avoid the stewardship committee or the weeks when the congregation asks for financial commitments for the coming year.

6. *Why do people in the church get skirmish about discussing money?*
7. *How does the way we spend our money reflect our priorities?*

Jesus was well aware of the trappings of wealth. He knew that possessions can take over our lives. Jesus does not speak harshly, but offers his warnings out of love.

8. *Would it have been more loving not to ask the rich man to give up his possessions? How so?*
9. *Would you prefer pastors to soften the message so as not to disturb you? Explain.*
10. *Imagine trying to thread a camel into an eye of a needle. What would be a contemporary example of this?*
11. *How do you feel as you hear Jesus' words on wealth?*

In this discussion on eternal life, Jesus changes the focus from the efforts of humans to the action of God. "For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible." (Mark 10:27 NRSV) We cannot earn our salvation, but we turn to God in humility, trusting in God's grace. As we experience that grace and love made known in Christ, we in turn will seek the ways to share generously with those in need. We may reach a point where giving a tithe is too little.

Someone once said that we cannot "out-give" God, but we can try.

12. *What does it mean to try to "out-give" God?*
13. *As a disciple of Christ, what role does money play for you?*
14. *What do you hope to remember from this lesson?*

Prayer

God of possibilities, give clarity to my use of money and possessions. Amen

Dig Deeper

Luke 8:1-3

last word

Take time with your household budget and review your monthly giving to the work of Christ.



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Written by John and Robin McCullough-Bade

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