



DUDLEY'S MONTHLY MESSAGE

MARK 10

NOVEMBER 2022

WHAT ARE WE MISSING?

As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him.

“Good teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

“Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone. You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother.’”

“Teacher,” he declared, “all these I have kept since I was a boy.”

Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth. Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!”

The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.”

The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, “Who then can be saved?” Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.”

Then Peter spoke up, “We have left everything to follow you!”

“Truly I tell you,” Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along 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 NIV

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Each time you meet someone you can be sure of this: You are looking into the face of a person who desperately wants to be known, to be loved, and to be valued. We are designed for those longings to be met. When they are unmet, we are not only unsatisfied, but dangerous to ourselves and to our society. The untold energy and money spent in the frantic search for satisfaction continues to propel humans to embrace the unimaginable. Each new peddler who comes along knows we are suckers for new experiences, new philosophies, new fads, new relationships, and new takes on religion.

A rich young man who was a prominent leader came to Jesus and asked what he must do to inherit eternal life (see Mark 10:17-31). Jesus told him what any rabbi would tell him: "Keep the commandments and don't live in sin." Surprisingly, the young man responded that he had done that. Yet he was actually testifying that he was still not satisfied. He was rich. He was righteous. He was a ruler. Still he came to the newest Rabbi in the area and asked for what else he must do to gain the fulfillment of the hope in his heart. In his mind he suspected that God intended for people to be more content than he was.

Today, we still think that if we had more wealth, more morality, and more

power, we would be as happy as possible. So we strive. But it is time to listen to Jesus. He loved the young man, so He told him the truth. He described the life that is truly satisfying: Give -sacrificially! It was too much for the young man. He couldn't conceive of a life without the core of his obvious values. He wanted ultimate happiness, but only as an added feature to a life built around the center of wealth, power, and religious righteousness. Had he stayed around, he would have learned along with the disciples how the life of sacrificial generosity is embraced. Truthfully, the disciples didn't get it either, as evidenced by Peter's response. He continued to hold on to the transactional concept of relating to God. It sounded like Jesus was saying that the young man could, by selling and giving, merit the life he was wanting. Peter piped in that he and the others had given up a lot to follow Jesus. He wanted to know what reward they had earned. Cryptically, Jesus assured him that any sacrifice he had made would be overwhelmed by the blessing he would be getting in this world and beyond, but Peter was missing the point. You can't bargain with God to get a good deal.

The common concept of wealth in that day was very close to the way we believe today. Either prosperity in physical and financial things is a sign of righteousness, or it is evidence of mis-

used power in oppressing others and is therefore wicked. When Jesus said that it was hard for the rich person to enter the kingdom, the disciples were confounded. After all, they believed that a person's riches must mean that they have cooperated with the principles and laws that govern creation, and they have reaped the harvest of aligning with God's order. (The parallel belief being that the poor must not have lived by these principles and laws and are therefore not righteous nor prosperous.) The prosperity gospel is not new. On the other hand, there have always been some who suspected that a rich person got their wealth by taking it from others. In their world of "fairness," everyone should have the same amount of resources. If some have more and others have less, there must have been oppression of some kind. This idea is not new, either. Jesus, however, changes the conversation entirely. He is talking about a new way of seeing everything.

It is as hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God as it is for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. That's impossible! It would take a miracle from God! That's the point. We humans desperately need for the center of our lives to have some sense of worth that we can't give up the money, morals, and power that promised to be that center. We would have nothing. We would be

worthless, unknown, and unloved. The young rich man went away grieving. It is the same word used to describe Jesus on the night in Gethsemane when He contemplated being separated from the Father while becoming a substitute for sinners. His heart was too heavy. How could it be? He grieved thinking of the center of His life being taken away. His center was the constant fellowship with the Father. The rich man's center was his wealth, his morality, and his power. The miracle that is required is transformation of the heart, which is as radical as being born again.

This story is in the context of Jesus revealing how unique and counterintuitive His kingdom is. Mark has arranged his presentation to show how slowly but surely the real nature of God's life is beginning to dawn on the closest disciples. It is hurting their brains to think of such an upside down agenda. They are challenged by the thought that you win by losing, live by dying, and gain influence by giving up power. So Mark moves quickly to Jesus, for the third time, telling them that the central point to His appearance is His upcoming rejection, death, and resurrection. They don't get it fully. In fact, James and John respond by asking to have the most important seats when Jesus is enthroned. They are thinking about throne and power. Jesus is talking about cross and humiliation:

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For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45 NIV)

That is the secret, the mystery, the heart of the kingdom of God that Jesus brought to earth in Himself. It is radical. It is impossible to comprehend apart from the grace of revelation.

Why is Jesus' death necessary? As many are saying today, why not just let His act of serving be an example to us? Why must Jesus be separated from the Father? Why atonement? Isn't that just some ancient idea that uncivilized generations had before humanity came of age to think in terms of a loving God who would never approve of hell, wrath, blood, death, substitution, etc.? Because all real change in people happens only by substitutionary sacrifice. The eternal God of love is the eternal God of justice. Sin has created a debt that must be paid. Ransom is what happened when Jesus died. Real love is demonstrated. Our value is established. The secret power of transformation is released like leaven in the lump. When we believe the story, encounter the living Jesus, receive the unconditional, unending love of the God who knows us thoroughly and values us as His own life, we are changed at our core. The center of our lives is now

the exalted Christ. Loved, known, and valued! The restlessness of our hearts calms into the rest corresponding to His own rest after finishing His work of redemption. Debt is paid. Enmity is destroyed. Fear is assuaged. We began to explore the life of freedom from the stains that sin has inflicted. Living for others begins to have more satisfying meaning than anything else. The deepest longings of our hearts begin to take a breath, and slowly we embrace the life of the kingdom of heaven as it invades the earth.



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