

WHERE IS YOUR HEART?

Covetousness, Kingdom, and the Great Reversal

PART TWO – THREADING CAMELS

By Pastor Ricky Stephen

Mark 10:23-27

I. THE DECEITFULNESS OF WEALTH

Modern technology makes our financial realities available to us, anytime and anyplace. Our cultural obsession with maintaining our wealth is fed through this ability. Widespread anxiety about finances plague many people.

Our Lord described this concern as thorns wrapping around a plant to choke it out. He called it 'the deceitfulness of wealth' (Mark 4:19).

Wealth lies by making us proud if we are doing well. Wealth lies by making us worry about what we could lose.

It's a burden, wealth. A burden which slumps the shoulders of the rich young man who rejects the call to discipleship. Jesus uses this rejection as a teachable moment for the disciples in Mark 10:23-27.

We see in this passage that wealth is spiritually dangerous, because it can lead us off the kingdom way.

I. WEALTH'S WOES

Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "*How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!*"

Mark 10: 23-24

The disciples were amazed. Jesus names the challenge clearly: wealth can prevent someone from responding fully to His call. Why the amazement? Because wealth is universally desired - even seen as a sign of moral success. Yet, Scripture warns that wealth is spiritually dangerous.

A. Wealth Can Make Our Hearts Proud

Moses warned the Israelites on the cusp of the promised land: you will get rich, and in getting rich:

...your hearts will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God...You may say to yourself, 'My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.'

Deut. 8:14 & 17

Wealth brings status and power. If you were forced to drive the \$8M Bugatti Divo for a few days, people may pay more attention to you, give you more benefits and treat you differently.

Over time, this difference in how you are treated may grow your ego to say: 'Yeah, you know what, I am a big deal. I am important. I've *earned* this.'

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B. Wealth can Lead to Worry

The rich man does not walk away puffed with pride; he is grieved (Mark 10:22). Wealth not only tempts pride but also fosters anxiety about loss and maintenance of possessions. Jesus links this to the Parable of the Sower:

“...the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth, and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful.”

Mark 4:19

If you went from driving the Bugatti to driving the 3-cylinder Pontiac Firefly, you'd probably complain a bit. We get used to comfort and come to expect it. When the comforts we are accustomed to are threatened, even if they are gratuitous, it can make us anxious.

Wealth is spiritually dangerous because its values are opposed to the Kingdom Way. We often talk about James 3:1, and how teachers are judged more harshly. Jesus seems to be saying the same thing of riches. They make it harder to enter the Kingdom. They put us in a place of more difficult judgment.

II. THREADING CAMELS

Jesus looked around and said, *“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.”*

Mark 10:25

The disciples were amazed. Jesus isn't just saying it's difficult—He's saying it's impossible. In plain language: the rich entering God's kingdom happens when hell freezes over.

For many of us, this should be a chilling thought, because we are wealthy. If you have a net worth between \$100K and \$1M in USD, you're in the top 17% of wealth globally. At least 40% of the world lives with a net worth under \$10K.¹

Wealth and the Kingdom are opposed. The way of wealth—pride and worry—clashes with the values of God's Kingdom. Trying to follow Jesus while holding on tightly to our possessions is like being a dual citizen of two warring nations.

A. The Way of the Kingdom: Humility

Wealth leads to pride, but the Kingdom calls for humility. Jesus says to 'enter the Kingdom' we must become like a little child, lowly and dependent (Mark 10:15). Elsewhere, Jesus says the poor have the Kingdom of God (Luke 6:20b).

Poverty is a more spiritually beneficial condition than riches because it reminds us of our true condition—dependent on God's gracious gifts.

In a culture which blames or praises people's social conditions based on choices, recognizing grace as the hand behind everything in our lives makes us humble.

Those who work with the street affected ask most for people's hearts to change towards the poor. If my high status isn't something I'm responsible for, but it was my participation in the grace of God, then my gratitude leads to humility which leads to compassion.

As the Psalmist reminds us:

“Know that the LORD Himself is God. It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people, the sheep of His pasture.”

Psalm 100:3 NASB

B. The Way of the Kingdom: Sacrificial Love

The rich young man rejects the call to discipleship, because he's holding on to something, his great possessions (Mark 10:22). The Kingdom of God is a Kingdom of sacrificial love, of letting go for the sake of others.

“Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant,...even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve...”

Mark 10:43 & 45

Blessings are meant to flow. Wealth becomes spiritually dangerous when hoarded.

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There are examples in Scripture of wealth used rightly:

- Joseph of Arimathea gave his tomb for Jesus (Mark 15:42).
- Women who financed Jesus' ministry (Luke 8:1-3).
- Lydia in Philippi hosted Paul and helped establish the first European church (Acts 16:14-15).
- Macedonian churches gave generously despite poverty—demonstrating how generosity is not just for the wealthy. (2 Cor. 8:1-5).
- Jesus—rich in power and glory, yet emptied Himself for us.

The principle is clear: *“From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.”* (Luke 12:48b)

- ~~The Rich Young Ruler~~

He cannot walk the way of the kingdom because he cannot let go of his wealth. He cannot empty himself as Christ did. Wealth, when clung to, makes the path impossible.

It is in this way that wealth makes entering the Kingdom impossible.

III. WHERE'S YOUR HEART

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.”

Mark 10:26-27

There is one who can thread a camel through the eye of a needle. One who can fold time and space in on themselves. One who can take a wealthy person's heart and make it humble. God.

This story isn't just a moral lesson. It's a spiritual mirror, a litmus test, for where our hearts really are.

Imagine yourself in the story.

Jesus rolls into town—downtown Kamloops, perhaps. You drive down the hill to hear Him, pushing through the crowd for your chance to ask the question that's been burning in you: 'What must I do to inherit eternal life?'

‘Keep the commandments,’ He says.

You nod. You've done your best. Maybe not perfect, but close enough. And then Jesus looks at you with love in His eyes and says:

‘One thing you lack. Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.’

What flashes through your mind as He says those words? What excuse, what hesitation rises up first? That answer is where your heart is.

Because Jesus said:

“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Matthew 6:21

You cannot dethrone that idol on your own. You cannot heal the sickness of the heart yourself. The story doesn't end in condemnation but with possibility - ‘With man this is impossible, but not with God.’

As R.T. France comments:

“The salvation of the rich is always a miracle, but miracles are God's speciality.”²

Jesus isn't trying to wound you. He's trying to heal you. He's not here to take life from you but to offer life to you. He begins with the same question He asked the rich young ruler:

Where's your heart?

ENDNOTES

1. According to the Global Wealth Report by UBS.
<https://www.ubs.com/global/en/wealthmanagement/insights/global-wealth-report.html>
2. R.T. France. (01 Jan 2002). New International Greek Text Commentary: The Gospel of Mark. Eerdmans. pg. 406.

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Open Up

We all have different thresholds for what we consider 'wealthy' to mean. What does it mean for you given your upbringing and past?

Dig In

1. Read **Deuteronomy 8:10-18**

·How have you observed the connection between wealth and pride?

·How have you learned to determine what is 'enough'?

2. Read **Mark 10:23-27**

·If Jesus said to you, 'one thing you lack, sell your possessions and give them to the poor,' what comes to mind?

What would be hard to give?

·How do we continue to hold onto things which have a hold on us, but still keep Jesus first?

Prayer

Share your typical prayer requests, but perhaps with special attention to seek guidance from the Holy Spirit for anyone who may need your help-especially this Christmas season. Where is God calling us to be generous out of our gratitude for His gifts?