

Scripture Reading:

Luke 18: "15 Then they also brought infants to Him that He might touch them; but when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. 16 But Jesus called them to Him and said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. 17 Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it." 18 Now a certain ruler asked Him, saying, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" 19 So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. 20 You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Honor your father and your mother.' " 21 And he said, "All these things I have kept from my youth." 22 So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." 23 But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich. 24 And when Jesus saw that he became very sorrowful, He said, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! 25 For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." 26 And those who heard it said, "Who then can be saved?" 27 But He said, "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God." 28 Then Peter said, "See, we have left all and followed You." 29 So He said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or parents or brothers or wife or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, 30 who shall not receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come eternal life.""

'Inheriting Eternal Life'

As I mentioned last week, the account of Jesus blessing the infants brought to Him directly relates to the account of the rich young ruler which we will consider this week!

- **Jesus corrected His disciples and blessed the very children they would have turned away**
- **Jesus then said that we must receive the Kingdom as a little child or infant**

In the midst of all this a rich young ruler approaches Jesus, addressing Him as the “good teacher” and he asks Jesus a simple question:

- **“What shall I do to inherit eternal life?”**
- **Coming to Jesus is a good thing!**
- **Knowing that Jesus is good is a good thing!**
- **Asking about having eternal life is a good thing!**
- **However, all of these can be done in the flesh with the wrong motives, which was certainly the case with this rich young ruler!**

Last week we concluded that raising ‘Christian’ children was impossible: As children of Adam they are dead in their trespasses and sins and must be brought to Jesus in faith trusting His promise that salvation is unto us and our children. This week we see that converting an adult is impossible as well:

- **In the same way they must come or be brought in faith trusting God for their salvation:**
- **As Jesus reminded His disciples...**
“Things which are impossible with men are possible with God!”

Looking at our text, once again we have a ‘rich’ man at the center of this passage...I am not sure that I understand all the implications, but Luke in his orderly account presents three rich men in very short order:

We saw the account of the rich man & Lazarus in chapter 16, this rich young ruler here in chapter 18 and chapter 19 will begin with the account of Zacchaeus who was a very wealthy tax collector.

- **We have a rich man who is unnamed and surely lost**
- **We have here another unnamed rich ruler whose final destination is left in doubt**
- **And finally we will see salvation coming to the house of the rich man who IS named: Zacchaeus!**

At a minimum it shows God's individual care for His sheep, putting their names in the Book of Life, and gives us the sober, 3-fold, reminder of the dangers of riches

There has been much discussion down through the years as to why Jesus questioned the reference to His being the "good teacher." It is obvious from this rich man's final response, that there is a major heart problem: I believe he refers to Jesus as the good teacher to imply that he is the good student!

- **Jesus reminds him of the implications of what he has said, "No one is good but One, that is, God."**

This rich man should again remind us of the Pharisee who stood praying to himself when we hear him ask: "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus will be patient with this man, but we will see that the ruler does not approach Jesus as one who has been given the gift of faith crying with the Publican, "Lord have mercy on me a sinner!" Jesus knows that He is dealing with a proud man and how He answers can give us some insights into how to evangelize the lost:

- **Jesus takes this man where he is and leads him to see his need for salvation.**

This account is given in all three synoptic Gospels so we have a very complete picture of what transpired between Jesus and this man: Jesus knows it will be his pride that responds to any mention of the Law, so He says to the ruler... "If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments" and the young man answered, "which ones?"

Jesus then lists some: ‘do not commit adultery,’ ‘do not murder,’ ‘do not steal,’ ‘do not bear false witness,’ ‘defraud not,’ ‘honor your father and mother:’ A couple of things to notice here:

First the order of the commands does not match how they are given in the Ten Commandments and I think this is to remind us that if we break any part of God’s Law we are guilty of all of God’s Law – NO favorites!

We also need to consider why Jesus goes right to the second table of the Law: Those commands regarding the second great command to love your neighbor as yourself. This is our lesson about evangelism: Jesus is not looking to win a debate, but wants this man to consider where he is at and so first Jesus must expose his pride and thus He plays right to it full well knowing how this proud young man would answer:

- **“All these things I have kept from my youth.
What do I still lack”**

Again he sounds like the proud Pharisee who had done even more than God’s Law required... In HIS mind of course.

He is not asking what he lacks because he thinks he needs salvation, he is looking for confirmation from this Jesus of Nazareth that he HAS done all that is needed!

- **Mark gives us an important detail telling us that, “then Jesus looking at him, loved him”**

The next statement from Jesus was an expression of love! As we have often said if a doctor knows that someone has a serious cancer invading their body the loving act may be telling them that they must undergo chemotherapy... ‘You will greatly suffer as we give you poison and hope it kills the cancer before it kills you.’ This is NOT what anyone wants to hear! It would be much easier to say, ‘things are looking up, just go home and take two aspirin for the pain’ But that would be dishonest... and cruel... and ultimately deadly!

Such is the case with much of our evangelism: People do not want to hear that they are lost, they do not want to hear that they only deserve the punishments of hell.

- **We often back off or soft pedal things because we just KNOW what their reaction is going to be!**

Here we see Jesus demonstrating real love for this man by making him honestly face his HEART problem! Jesus lovingly said, “You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.”

Luke tells us, “But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich.” Matthew and Mark tell us he went away in this state and all would seem lost. We are not told what the final end of this man was, but the lesson that Jesus now tells His disciples reminds us that we just might see him in heaven! Remember the proud Pharisee Nicodemus who was at the end attending to Jesus at His burial!

Jesus had already reminded the disciples that they could not serve God and mammon, God and money. Now He turns to them and says, “How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the Kingdom of God!”

- **How hard?? Impossible...**

And Jesus uses a simple illustration to graphically make this point clear. “For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a Rich man to enter the Kingdom of God.”

- **BOY have there been attempts to water this example down throughout Church history!**

First some said that the Greek word translated camel could also be used to describe a heavy rope, so maybe Jesus was giving a fisherman’s example! The problem is that it does violence to the Greek and does NOT make the very point Jesus stresses!

Today, many argue that we NOW know more about those times: They had small doors in the walls of their cities and that if a merchant came after hours he had to unload the camel and make him crawl through the small door which was referred to as the ‘eye of the needle.’

So we keep trying to make the camel smaller or the eye bigger

- **We keep rationalizing this verse because we don’t like what Jesus is saying...**

Time to have the children answer the question: Can a camel pass through the eye of a needle? Impossible seems like a good word to describe this situation and lo and behold that is EXACTLY what Jesus tells His disciples: The disciples seem to get the point and ask, “who then can be saved” In other words:

- **How are we going to witness to rich people!**
- **Jesus simply responds, “The things which are impossible with men are possible with God!”**

OK, kids here is another question so the adults can ponder the answer: Could God make a camel pass through the eye of a needle?

Can God save rich people? Yes He can, just like He can save our covenant children as we learned last week and just as He will save all of the elect, those that Peter referred to as ‘those afar off.’

The disciples, as usual, do not fully grasp what Jesus is teaching, or seem concerned for the man who Matthew & Mark tells us left at this point, but rather are thinking about themselves. Peter, always the spokesman it seems at the wrong times, turns to Jesus and says, “See, we have left all and followed You, what shall we have?”

- **Jesus is kind, giving an answer that not only comforts them but all the Saints down through the ages**

Jesus responds, “Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or parents or brothers or wife or children, for the sake of the Kingdom of God, who shall not receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come eternal life.”

Jesus has now reminded His disciples over and over that their focus must be on Him, being willing even to give up family and certainly money!

- **This is what is required to inherit eternal life.**
- **This rich young ruler needed only to honestly bow before Jesus confessing with the publican that he needed God’s mercy because he was a sinner!**

Jesus promises eternal life, but He also promises blessings in the present life! I think this is going to be one of the wonders of heaven to see how all

of these promises worked out in the lives of those who lost much, from a human perspective here on earth!

- **This rich young ruler had accomplished much in his life from a human standpoint**
- **He thought himself to be very wise, sure that he would attain to eternal life after living a successful life here on earth,**
- **BUT such was not the case.**

He had chosen unrighteous mammon or money as his god and he was in need of repentance...

The kind of repentance we will see with Zacchaeus in a few weeks.

In addressing the concerns raised by Peter, Jesus also made mention of other things like homes and family which can also be our idols...

- **“MY Life”**
- **“My Family”**
- **“MY Children”**
- **“My lovely bride”**
- **Even “MY church” can be the idol that costs me eternal life!**

The test is ALWAYS the same: Do I love and worship Jesus with all of my heart, soul, mind, and strength? Would the sudden loss of ANY of these earthly treasures or securities change that relationship?

We are living through troubled economic times right now and there are important lessons for us to learn here.

- **We must remember that it is not money that is evil, but the love of money, serving money as our God.**

Having money as our idol does not mean that we take a pile of federal reserve notes and place them on the fireplace and bow down to them

- **Rather, IF we are anxious about whether we have enough money or anxious about keeping what we have then we have failed to put our real trust in God.**

Idolatry is putting anything before the One True God. This is why Jesus passed over the first table of the Law and then came back to it with real force by commanding this man to sell all and follow Jesus

- **He could not give up his money because that was his priority... His idol!**

Note that Jesus did not say destroy what you have, but rather sell what you have and give to the poor.

- **Money is not the problem, but a heart that worships it is!**

In one of the updates this week I shared some thoughts on the current economic crisis from R.C. Sproul Jr. where he reminded us that the solution to our current crisis is very simple: “Work hard, and consume less than you make!”

- **These are wise words and if they are followed by individuals, families, communities or even nations it will bring true blessings.**

God is NOT opposed to blessing His people with great wealth...

- **He gets VERY upset when the blessings He brings replaces our trust in Him:**

Listen again the warning given to the people of God as they were about to enter the Land of Milk and Honey:

Deuteronomy 8:7 For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, that flow out of valleys and hills; 8 a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey; 9 a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing; a land whose stones are iron and out of whose hills you can dig copper. 10 When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land which He has given you. 11 "Beware that you do not forget the Lord your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today, 12 lest--when you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell in them; 13 and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; 14 when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of

Egypt, from the house of bondage... 17 then you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.' 18 And you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day. 19 Then it shall be, if you by any means forget the Lord your God, and follow other gods, and serve them and worship them, I testify against you this day that you shall surely perish."

- **Words of great warning and great wisdom that hopefully this rich young ruler went home to ponder!**
- **Words of great warning and great wisdom that need to be heeded by our nation today!**
- **We must also be responsible as families and individuals!**

Linda and I have always tried to ask that simple question about "things" that come into our lives: "Would I still love God if it is taken away?" If we can't honestly answer YES to that question then we may find ourselves in the sad position of this rich young ruler.

We don't have to win the lottery to have this problem, it begins with the little things...

- **A young man's first car**
- **That special glassware the young woman is buying for her first house**
- **As we grow older it can be that first home, the new job and even children can be seen as "riches" that become more important than God in our lives!**

The bottom line is that we must be ready, with regard to ANYTHING that we have, for Jesus to come to us saying, 'sell all' and follow me!

- **When we order our lives in such a way, we have no fears about stock market crashes**
- **We will not be anxious about foolish decisions made by our elected officials or government bureaucrats.**
- **This does NOT mean that we cannot oppose them, should not work to change them or even being angry enough to really sing Psalm 2 with gusto as our commissioning hymn today!**

We know that our God owns the cattle on a thousand hills, and that He not only loves His people but promises to care for them!

However, whenever He says something needs to go: Whether it is keeping that new carpet clean or a few trillion dollars of value in the market...

We must join with Job in saying, “Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord.”

We know that Job’s earthly wealth was restored and even doubled, but more importantly we know that Job had inherited eternal life so he could rejoice even in the midst of his tribulation saying,

“I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. 26 And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: 27 whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another.”

Job 19:25-27

➤ Job was a very rich man who lost it all, but he inherited eternal life

Communion Meditation:

Psalm 34:8-11

“Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him! Oh, fear the Lord, you His saints! There is no want to those who fear Him. The young lions lack and suffer hunger; But those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing.

Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord.”