

Being Rich Versus Being Free

Scripture Reading — Mark 10:17-27

17As 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?" 18"Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good--except God alone. 19You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.'" 20"Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy." 21Jesus 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." 22At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth. 23Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!" 24The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! 25It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." 26The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, "Who then can be saved?" 27Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God." —

"How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!" Mark 10:23

A young man asked Jesus a question about inheriting eternal life. He asked the question as one whose mortgage was paid and whose income was secure. He was free from many of the concerns others have about trying to make ends meet and feeding their families. He was free to pursue the good life ahead of him.

Jesus answered the young man's question with a rather simple, expected answer: "Do the commandments." The man honestly figured he had done all that. But he hadn't done enough.

Diagnosing the man's problem, Jesus chose his words carefully: "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." It was a ticket to freedom.

Jesus' words are troubling because money has a way of possessing us. That can be as true for the poor, who don't have it, as for the rich, who have plenty.

The point is that you and I need to be free to receive the gift of eternal life. We cannot accept God's gift if our hands are full of other stuff that ties us down and takes priority.

Wealth is not a bad thing. It's only bad when it gets in the way of following Jesus.

Jesus is calling you to follow him. What do you need to let go of to truly follow him?

Prayer

Lord, it's hard to live freely and with open hands. We have bills, children, aging parents--and our hands seem full. Help us follow you, trusting that you know best. Amen.

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