

## Study following Sunday October 10th 2021

**Prepare:** Can you recall all the ten commandments?

**Praise:** Spend time giving thanks that 'All things are possible with God'.

**Passage:** Read Mark 10.17-31

**Ponder:** Mark loves to picture Jesus 'on the way', on a journey that mirrors the spiritual journey his disciples are going on. So, too, we are encouraged to go on a journey with him, as disciples, finding new things every day, growing in our connection to him through all of our lives.

- Look back to think about your journey of faith, remember others who journeyed alongside you.

The rich young man who appears in verse 17 is also mentioned in Matthew's and Luke's Gospel (Matthew 19.16, Luke 18.18). This man's question brings a response from Jesus that brings us to a crucial understanding about the Kingdom of God. At first we might think here is an ideal recruit to the movement, he is earnestly seeking eternal life and, according to Matthew, he is young, and to Luke he is a ruler. He is clearly rich and comes to Jesus of his own accord. His opening phrase is probably just politeness but Jesus uses it to give an important message.

- How might you greet Jesus if you met him 'on the way'?

The man links together 'good behaviour' with 'eternal life', and it is as if he pictures himself rolling out his good deeds before God at the moment of judgement. Jesus wants to turn the spotlight away from good deeds - whether they be done by Jesus or anyone else - and turn the light fully on God, who is the source of all goodness. Jesus then lists the commandments that focus on our treatment of others. At this the man could have walked away in the knowledge that he had fulfilled what was required of him. But he stays, as if he knows there is something more to come. The man replies confidently that he has kept them, and Jesus delivers a body blow. 'Sell...give...come...follow' these four actions leave the man crestfallen, he cannot conceive how he might give up all his great wealth.

- Ponder for a moment why Jesus makes this demand of him and not others. How might we react if Jesus made this demand of us?

Jesus then turns to his disciples, and we hear the follow-up teaching that helps us 'on the way'. Two thousand years ago, those with wealth were seen as being blessed by God, perhaps a similar idea is retained today. Jesus, though, equates wealth with difficulty not ease, the idea of a camel and an eye of a needle is an iconic picture that very much focuses on the impossible. This is not about stripping away as much as you can to fit through some narrow gate, it is a task only made possible with God (verse 27). Peter speaks up for the disciples to say - "Yes but we're alright aren't we Jesus?", and Jesus points out that they have indeed given up material possessions and will gain more in this life, as well as enter the life to come. There is a sting in the tail though with the inclusion of persecutions (verse 30) which comes just before eternal life in the list of what they will receive. The final point is a reminder of the topsy turvy nature of God's kingdom, a point Jesus makes a number of times, in words and then through his sacrificial death as a servant for all on the cross.

**Pray:** Pray for all who are wealthy, that they would not let their wealth harden their hearts but that the Holy Spirit would soften their hearts to know God's love and care. Pray for all of us who are rich compared to most of the rest of the world, that we, too would know soft hearts of love to our neighbours both locally and globally.

S.Partridge 2021 with reference to 'Mark' France (1996), and ESV Study Bible (2008).