

## PENTECOST 22 (2018)

### Mark 10 Jesus Christ: The Impossible Man's Possible!

**Mark 10:23–31** Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!” And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, “Children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.” And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to him, “Then who can be saved?” Jesus looked at them and said, “With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God.” Peter began to say to him, “See, we have left everything and followed you.” Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”

In the Name of Jesus.

Proverbs 10:15 <sup>15</sup> A rich man's wealth is his strong city;  
the poverty of the poor is their ruin.

*Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!” And the disciples were amazed at his words.*

This looking and amazing words follow the account of the rich man who kept the commandments and yet was panicked about something still lacking! The Proverbs continue:

- <sup>16</sup> The wage of the righteous leads to life,  
the gain of the wicked to sin.
- <sup>17</sup> Whoever heeds instruction is on the path to life,  
but he who rejects reproof leads others astray. <sup>1</sup>

Those Proverbs of Solomon are difficult. Are they stating something God approves? Or uncovering our weakness? God does give good things to save us from bad stretches. But do we turn those GIFTS into a FORTRESS of which we are god? There IS a linkage, in the Old Testament, between the continued good gifts from God to men and the righteous, instructed life those men should then lead. No WONDER the disciples were amazed!

Well, there's no doubt what Jesus thinks of the whole thing! Dr. Luther exclaimed at Table one day: 'Dear Lord! How are you ever going to SATISFY us?!' He was speaking of the conundrum of the God Who DELIGHTS in giving gifts to His creatures, to His children—Who then is DISPLACED by those very GIFTS!

As y'all teach your household the six chief parts of the Small Catechism of Doctor Martin Luther, a helpful resource is the Large Catechism of Doctor Martin Luther! In his explanation of the First Commandment, he summarized the Gospel text today.

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<sup>1</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#). (2016). (Pr 10:15–17). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

The most COMMON form of idolatry is Mammon: acquisition of things over us! And then, in our BONDAGE, our foolish BOASTING about how WE possess those THINGS!

But the most pernicious idolatry, the false worship most harmful to our salvation is self-righteousness; our OWN satisfaction with our behavior before our God; the COMPARING of one man to the next, which most foolishly COMMENDS one man over the next FOR...DOING...WHAT...HE...IS...SUPPOSED...TO...DO...ANYWAY!

And so it goes; and so we learn, do we not, my dear ones, our whole Christian life?

The Commandments insist that ALL the energy God puts in us, AND the moments He grants us in this world, BELONG...TO...GOD! Prayer to Him; adoration and thanksgivings abounding; seeking His will—ESPECIALLY since we BEGIN LIFE in a state of rebellion against Him!

And so our lives—what we call our ‘careers?’—are FILLED with such prayer and adoration and seeking to please Him, correct?! And, along the way, here and there throughout the day, we find a few seconds to conduct business, to work, to manage money and things.

Or is YOUR LIFE as UPSIDE DOWN as I must confess  
MINE IS?!

And PERNICIOUSNESS: who of us can keep from hearing  
the news and clucking and chirping about the OBVIOUS sinning  
and law-breaking evident in others—things we good little  
Christians have left behind ages ago, right?!

Do we strain our arms, patting ourselves on the back, over  
GOOD...DEEDS...WE...ARE...SUPPOSED...TO...DO...ANY  
WAY?!

‘Good job breathing there, today!’

‘Impressed with the way you pump blood with your heart!’

‘You, really are something, following the laws of physics—  
and just taking up the space that your mass is supposed to!’

‘You deserve a PRIZE for doing what God MADE you to  
do!’

No wonder that rich man was still uneasy. His God was  
saving Him!

The Good Physician COULD diagnose us endlessly, like THAT. But THAT, is not why He came!

He came, to do the impossible! So He speaks with authority, that all things are possible with God. For...THERE...HE...WAS! IN our flesh! In the Jordan with those confessing their rebellion against heaven; and heaven was torn open NOT to burn those rebels, but to bless the God Who is now man—all the way!

Sin; death; grave; gone and forgotten—at least everything He had TAUGHT His disciples. ‘And after three days, the Son of Man will rise!’

Yet He rose! And put the IMPOSSIBLE gift into hands and mouths and lives like the women at the tomb, and His disciples, AND Peter; and you, and me; even me.

He puts in our mouths His Body to eat and His Blood to drink—to do the impossible! To take those turn God’s GIFTS into OUR OWN ACHIEVEMENTS—and He gives us all He has left! Himself, Calvary-wise, Body and Blood. And so, for good, heaven is looking past our upside down lives!

Even the apostles start notching up notches of religiosity AND nickels and dimes! ‘We have left EVERYTHING to follow you!’

‘You will be repaid; with what you left; AND with tribulation. And, if it means anything to you: eternal life!’

So, would y’all like to hear the sad, sob story of how this poor pastor has sacrificed and given up on things and pursued goodness despite opposition? ‘Resist the devil and he will flee from you!’

I have a much happier story to tell! It’s about a plucky little band of Lutherans no one takes notice of, who, working together at full capacity, praying and interceding, have, after 27 years now, given this poor pastor at least the SLIGHT POSSIBILITY of a hope that he may be saved! God be praised for y’all!

This is not really a joking matter, my dear ones. The ‘difficulty’ and ‘impossibility’ of which our Lord spoke was just another of his shorthand ways of speaking of the dreadful march He had begun to His inauguration of shame and helplessness on the cross. But there comes a point—OUR BAPTISM INTO CHRIST!—at which all the heavy weight of devotion due from us to God is lifted and turned to joy that bursts every chain we forge: of thing to thing, or worse, of self-satisfied achievement welded to superior self-estimation.

He calls us hard work; even impossible! To make us glad! To save us! NOT from poverty or disappointment! But to save us from making conclusions about heaven’s gaze upon us, based on how many treats heaven has dropped down; or how much heaven has turned us from our natural state to being like God!

REST in your 'impossible' status! REJOICE in it! For that goes along well with being a sinner in need of repentance, a child in need of instruction, a sick man in need of a doctor; broken hearts and crushed spirits: WHERE...GOD...IS...NEAR in the Name of Jesus! Amen!