



This week's Revd. Morris'

message: **What is our relationship with money? Do we possess it or does it possess us?**

In today's Gospel, we see Jesus interacting with a rich young man who poses an important question "**Good Teacher**, [ or 'Master Rabbi' in Hebrew - a title of great respect reserved for only the leading Jewish scholars ] **What must I do to inherit eternal life?**". Puzzlingly, Jesus then asks a seemingly bizarre question : "*Why do you call me good? No one is truly good but God alone.*" [ NB

The young man learns his lesson and refers to Jesus as merely as 'Teacher' when next he speaks ...]



Here we see Jesus challenging the young man on at least 3 levels :

1. Who and what is 'good'?
2. Are you saying that I, Jesus, am God? [ and, thus, truly good?]; and
3. Impliedly ... How good do you have to be to gain eternal life?

Jesus then responds in terms of the perfect obedience of the 'human directed commandments' of the 10 commandments. So, *why did Jesus speak*

*of the law providing eternal life when we believe that salvation is by Grace through faith?* [ see Romans 3:20 and 28; 4:6; Galatians 2:16 ; Ephesians 2:8 and 9 and 2 Timothy 1:9 ]

The *young* man responds saying he has observed them from *his youth* [?] ...so, despite his youth, presumably for a long period. Jesus then, responding in love for the young man, urges him to sell all that he has, donate the proceeds to the poor and follow Him. At that, the young man goes away sorrowful as he was very rich.

So Jesus, knowing the young man's heart, demonstrates that, in fact, the young man had not obeyed the Commandments in which he had placed his confidence. Since, by greed the young man had not put God first in his life nor loved his neighbour as himself. Perhaps the young man didn't realise, until confronted by Jesus, that *greed* had such a deep hold upon his very soul? Presumably, the young man inherited his wealth [or how else would he be able to legally possess so much at a young age]? How interesting that he phrases his question to Jesus in terms of '*inheritance*' of *eternal life*. An inheritance is in a sense an undeserved gift - you can't earn it - but someone has to first die. So, perhaps the young man wasn't too far from the mark since eternal life is in fact gained by a Divine gift of undeserved Grace through Jesus's death on the cross?

However, in fact, the young man thought of 'earning' eternal life by his efforts i.e. doing something. Jesus in this gospel reading demonstrates that no one, other than God himself, can be 'good', perfectly obey the Law and thus through merit deserve eternal life. But, thanks be to God, Jesus being much more than merely a Master Rabbi. He is our Saviour and Messiah and, through the New Covenant of Love and His death upon the cross, He opened the way for us to receive the free gift of eternal life.

**Well, what does this mean for us today?** We live in a land of plenty and most of us are also very rich [ at least by comparison to the average wealth of folks across the whole world]. The Disciples thought that a faithful person would be Divinely blessed and thus wealthy... but Jesus turns that on its head. Jesus challenges us to look closely at what we truly value most ... **Do we use our wealth as good stewards for His purposes or does our wealth own us?** He also challenges us to reconsider our relationship with God. Are we, like the young man, still trying to 'earn acceptance'? Or, in gratitude for that acceptance, are we now seeking to obey Him and take up Jesus's invitation to follow Him and His ways?

As a postscript, Jesus uses the metaphor in this gospel reading of a *camel going through the eye of a needle*. Theologians have argued the meaning of this phrase for millennia .. Was Jesus saying that in fact it is impossible for a rich person to be saved or that it is just very hard for this to occur? A common view is that Jesus is referring to a small gate in Jerusalem's walls that could be accessed in an emergency after the main gate was closed for the night. Camels could with difficulty pass through it but only when unloaded of their burdens [ hence the need for the rich to be similarly purged] Indeed, the Russian Orthodox church in Jerusalem is built in part around such gate [ see photo on the right] However, most modern theologians are sceptical if this, or any other like Jerusalem gate, was in fact known in Jesus' times as 'the eye of the needle'.



**Gospel reading: Mark 10:17-31. Some resources to dig deeper:**

<https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/ordinary-28-2/commentary-on-mark-1017-31-7> ; <https://www.gotquestions.org/rich-young-ruler.html> ; <https://classictheology.org/2021/10/12/through-the-eye-of-an-actual-needle-the-fake-gate-theory/>;

**Upcoming Parish Activities: Midweek service :** Wednesday 10:30 a.m ; **Every Sunday Guitars and Ukulele lessons** at 3 p.m; **Bible Study** Wednesday at 7 pm and Friday at 10:30 am;

**Readings for Next Sunday:** Job 38:1-7 and 34- 41; Ps 104:1-10 and 26; Hebrews 5:1-10; Mark 10: 32- 45

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**Parish Private Facebook site :** <https://www.facebook.com/groups/292308270851142> ; **Public Site:** <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61556418523933> ; **Tipper's Treasure's Facebook site:** <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61559040358754>

#### **ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY:**

We acknowledge and pay respect to the Turrbal and Jagera Peoples, the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we gather today. We acknowledge their continued spiritual connection to country and surrounding land, sky and water. We pay our respect to their Elders, past present and emerging and pray that we may continue to learn from and nurture one another in the spirit of Reconciliation.