



# STUDY GUIDE & DAILY READINGS

Sunday, October 25, 2009

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## “Looking Out for Number One” ENOUGH: Discovering Joy Through Simplicity and Generosity, Week 1 of 4

**Mark 10:17-31** — *The Word from the Bible (Today's New International Version)*

As 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?”

“Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone. You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother.’”

“Teacher,” he declared, “all these I have kept since I was a boy.”

Jesus 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.”

At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!”

The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for the rich to enter the kingdom of God.”

The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, “Who then can be saved?”

Jesus looked at them and said, “With human beings this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.”

Then Peter spoke up, “We have left everything to follow you!”

“Truly I tell you,” Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”

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### **Mark 10:17-31**

**The Rich Man's Question.** The story of the rich man gives us a fine example of the basic traits of Mark and deserves careful study. There are three other versions of the story, one of which (Luke 18:18-23) follows Mark's very closely, except that the man becomes “a ruler.” The changes in Matthew's version (19:16-22) illustrate well the differences between Mark and Matthew. It requires combining versions to get the popular title “the Rich (all) Young (Matthew only) Ruler (Luke only).”

The fourth version is found in the noncanonical Gospel According to the Hebrews, which exists only in fragmentary quotations. In certain respects it has obvious values that lead some to pronounce that it is the best version. This fourth version follows as translated from Gospel Parallels (Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1949):

The second of the rich men said to him, “Teacher, what good thing can I do and live?” He said to him, “Sir, fulfill the law and the prophets.” He answered, “I have.” Jesus said, “Go, sell all you have and distribute it to the poor; and come, follow me.” But the rich man began to scratch his head, for it did not please him. And the Lord said to him, “How can you say, I have fulfilled the law and the prophets, when it is written in the law: You shall love your neighbor as your self; and lo, many of your brothers, sons of Abraham, are clothed in filth, dying of hunger, and your house is full of many good things, none of which goes out to them?” And he turned and said to Simon, his disciple, who was sitting by him, “Simon, son of Jonah, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.”

### **Notes on Today's Scripture**

10:17-18. The salutation **good Teacher** is rejected by Jesus, who affirms that goodness belongs to God alone. In the sense of absolute goodness, in all its perfection, this would represent the traditional Jewish view. More than likely this quote from Jesus instead reflects the helplessness we all suffer against the power of sin, as expressed in Romans 7:18.

10:23-31. This passage directly addresses the subject of riches and discipleship. Typically in this culture, a “rich” or “wealthy” person was seen as blessed by God. It was assumed that they lived a life worthy of those blessings. The man in this section is probably looking to get praise from Jesus. Instead he is challenged with a request that he can not handle.

The explanation that there was a Needle’s Eye Gate into Jerusalem that a camel could enter only on its knees is a medieval sermon unfounded in fact. The plain meaning is that it is impossible for the rich to enter the kingdom. The disciples then respond from their understanding of the “rich” being blessed with the question, **“Who then can be saved?”**

The most striking idea in this story is the Gentile Christian conception of salvation as entirely the work of God, his rescue of helpless humanity. Jesus answers the question with the well quoted phrase, **“With human beings this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.”** Jesus is referring to the ability of God to save all humanity through God’s grace. This is the grace that is illustrated through Jesus’ death on the cross.

This dialogue between Jesus and Peter is related to verses 17-22 and 23-27 but seems to be a unit apart from the conversation with the “rich young ruler.” Careful examination ties the two together. It seems that Peter is beginning to get what Jesus has been preaching – that it is the heart of a person and not the outward appearance that counts for God. Therefore Peter claims, for all the disciples, that they have done what the rich man refused to do, **“left everything to follow”** Jesus. Jesus replies, in general terms, that renunciation of things in this world will bring everything in return, in both this life and the next.

### **Sermon Focus**

This passage of scripture is typically used to call into question the value wealth or riches — or to call into question the ambition to be wealthy. While this case can be made, Jesus does not condemn the wealthy or wealth in general. In other places, we see Jesus interacting with the wealthy and proclaiming their salvation — Zacchaeus, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea are three such persons in Jesus’ ministry. So what is it about wealth that makes it difficult for the “rich” to get into the Kingdom of God?

This is a question that has haunted our western culture since the day Jesus said those words. What is it about being rich? Or better – is there something here that might separate us from God and jeopardize our relationship with God?

This is the real question. What is it that Jesus is trying to teach his disciples and us? Is it the distraction of things? Is it the weight of responsibility? Is it the false sense of independence and freedom? Or is it simply that we don’t think we need God, when we can take care of ourselves?

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## **Prayer Focus**

Trietsch is a praying church. This morning, as you worship, one of our prayer volunteers is praying for everyone in each section of our worship center. We believe that prayer changes lives and hearts for good and for God.

We invite you to join these volunteers by praying for those persons around you. We believe these prayers will have an immediate impact on those for whom you are praying.

Remember... someone is praying for you. Here a few prayers to guide you, written by some of our church members.

***Day by day, O Lord, three things I pray:  
To see thee more clearly, love thee more dearly,  
follow thee more clearly,  
day by day. Amen***

— attributed to Richard of Chichester

***Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.***

***Where there is hatred, let me sow love;***

***Where there is injury, pardon;***

***Where there is doubt, faith;***

***Where there is despair, hope;***

***Where there is darkness, light***

***Where there is sadness, joy.***

***O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console,  
not so much to be understood as to understand,  
not so much to be loved, as to love;***

***For it is in giving that we receive;***

***it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;***

***it is in dying that we awake to eternal life.***

— St. Francis of Assisi

***Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever. Let Israel say: "His love endures forever." Let the house of Aaron say: "His love endures forever." Let those who fear the LORD say: "His love endures forever." In my anguish I cried to the LORD, and he answered by setting me free. 6 The LORD is with me; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? The LORD is with me; he is my helper. I will look in triumph on my enemies. It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man. It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in princes.***

— Psalm 118

# Daily Readings

*Over the next few weeks we will be exploring in our daily readings our commitment to God. This week we look at our life together as the church in prayers and presence in worship and study. These readings allow you to study passages that speak to our physical and spiritual life together.*

**Monday, October 26 – Read Matthew 6: 7-15.** When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, Jesus said, *“Pray like this...”* Pray through the Lord’s Prayer. Meditate on each phrase. As you pray through each section, what bread do you need? What forgiveness do you need? Who do you need to forgive? What strength do you need this day? You are not alone!

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**Tuesday, October 27 – Read Ephesians 6: 18.** This is one of several places in Paul’s letters where he instructs the followers of Christ to pray always. How can anyone pray always? Prayer is more than quiet time of meditation. Prayer is time with God. As such, prayer is an attitude by which we live. To pray always, is to recognize, expect, share, and live in the presence of God. In what ways and what places can you pray today?

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**Wednesday, October 28 – Read Matthew 18: 20.** *“Where two are more are gathered together in my name.”* Does this mean that God is not with us when we are alone? Certainly not! God is always with us. But when we are with others in the name of our Lord, God can use us to bless and enrich each other. We experience the benefit; we are increased when we gather together in the name of our Lord with others. How can you spend time each day with other Christians to feel the power of God’s presence through others?

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**Thursday, October 29 – Read Mark 11: 20-24.** This is a great passage of scripture. It illustrates the power of prayer. But prayer is also about what God wants for us. If we ask for a snake, will God give us a snake? Can you agree with God this day for what God would want for you? Together with God can you see the mountains that need to be moved in your life? Are you willing to let Christ have those mountains to move them as He would move them?

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**Friday, October 30 – Read Acts 1: 14.** To really get a feel for this passage, read the first five chapters of Acts. The word *“together”* is used again and again. These early Christians knew the value of sharing together in the name of our Lord. Who can you bless today with your presence in the name of the Lord?

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