

GRACE, MERCY, AND PEACE FROM GOD OUR HEAVENLY FATHER AND FROM OUR LORD AND SAVIOR, JESUS CHRIST.

The text is Mark the tenth chapter beginning at the twenty-third verse and we will start there:

Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!”

That shouldn't be a surprise to us. The Old Testament says it often enough in the Psalms and Proverbs and in today's lesson from Ecclesiastes, ***“He who loves money will not be satisfied with money.”*** And we have seen, if not in our own lives, then in history and stories how the hunger for wealth corrupts—how no matter how much we have, we want more. And that may be the key issue. The things of this broken world will never satisfy in the long run—they will always disappoint sooner or later.

But the disciples were surprised. They ***were amazed at his words***. From the world's point of view, wealth implies success, and who doesn't want to be successful? Who doesn't want to be independent and strong? Who doesn't want to be their own master?

See the problem? To seek the things of this world is the turn away from God. A hunger for wealth is like an open wound—sore and nagging. And it betrays the heart. Wealth isn't the only form of idolatry either. It isn't the only thing that has whispered in our ear, "You don't need God for this. You got it covered." We have all put our hopes in something else at one time or another—our strength, our cleverness. We have all treasured things that are no more than torn and rusty trinkets in God's sight. Jesus said, ***"where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."***

Those false, decaying treasures can never make it in to the kingdom of God.

... 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?"

Luther put it into perspective. He wrote a note, apparently to himself, but certainly for our benefit, "We are all Beggars. This is true." That should have us thinking about else something Jesus said, ***"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."***

Wealth is a problem. And not just the size of our bank accounts, but in any way—intellect, good looks, physical strength—that has us feeling that we are ok—that we don't need God's help, that we are just fine on our own, because we are not fine on our own. We are all beggars, and that is a good thing for us to understand. None of us could ever be rich enough, or strong enough, or beautiful enough to enter the kingdom of God on our own merits.

That's why ***Jesus looked at*** [the disciples] ***and said, "With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God."***

That's God's promise to us—all things are possible with Him. It isn't possible for one man to pay for the sins of another—except Jesus did it. It isn't possible to rise from the dead—except Jesus did it. Jesus became one of us to do the impossible and rescue us from our slavery to sin by giving up His own life, by the shedding of His own blood. He did that to accomplish the impossible, to draw us through the eye of a needle stripping us of all our filthy rags and worthless trinkets.

But Jesus hadn't done that yet when he was talking to the disciples, so perhaps we can understand Peter's reaction. I can almost see the look on Peter's face as he said, ***"See, we have left everything and followed you."*** I think the implied question was, "we've done enough, haven't we, to enter the kingdom?"

His answer was comforting—well almost. ***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.”***

We have a promise that even in this life turning back to God, and in doing that, turning away from the things that would destroy us, will be rewarded. We may not have given up much yet, but look around you. Already we see our family in Christ, our ***brothers and sisters and mothers and children.***

We have God’s sure promise that he will provide for us. He gives us our daily bread. He puts us in families for His name sake. And here is even more comfort. Did you note that fathers are not in the second list. We are children of the Father, the One True God—one family, one father now and ***in the age to come eternal life.***

Did you note too the phrase, ***with persecutions?***

We have God's love. We have His promises to provide and protect us, but there will be affliction too. We are struggling not only against our own weak flesh, but ***against the spiritual forces of evil*** too. The world hates us. It hates us because our Father gives us what we need and because of our confidence in His love. It hates us because in the world families are fragile, jobs are fragile, all the necessities of life are fragile. But our God is not.

We have confidence in His love, in His mercy, in His might, and in His majesty. If we have wealth, we rejoice in Him. If we struggle, we rejoice in Him for He is with us always.

He is with us in the good times. As the Old Testament lesson says, ***“Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil—this is the gift of God. For he will not much remember the days of his life because God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart.”***

He comes to us in the bad times too. Even when we were His enemies, ***[God] sent out His word and healed [us], and delivered [us] from [our] destruction.***

Our salvation is impossible. So, let us rest in the arms of our Father in whom nothing is impossible.

Amen

NOW MAY THE PEACE OF GOD WHICH PASSES ALL
UNDERSTANDING, KEEP YOUR HEARTS AND MINDS THROUGH
FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS IN TO LIFE EVERLASTING.