

The DAILY JESUS NEWS #233

Jesus' Final Journey to Jerusalem The Peril of Riches, and the Rewards of Faithfulness MK 10.23-31 (Parallel Texts: MT 19.23-30; LK 18.24-30)

23 Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, ^{MT}"*I tell you the truth. ^MHow hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!*"

24 The disciples were astonished at his words.

But Jesus said again, "*Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! 25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.*"

26 ^{MT}When the disciples heard this ^Mthey were even more befuddled, and said to each other, "Who then can be saved?"

27 Jesus looked at them and said, "*With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are eminently possible with God.*"

28 Then Peter spoke up, "We have left everything ^Lwe had ^Mto follow you! ^{MT}What then will there be for us?"

Jesus said to them, "*I tell you the truth. At the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

29 ^M"*No one who has left home ^Lor wife ^Mor brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel 30 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.*

31 "*But many who are first will be last, and the last first.*"

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NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = ^{MT}, Mark = ^M, Luke = ^L, John = ^J, Acts = ^A. This "superscript ID" is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible book until a different superscript appears. In addition, *red italics identify the words of Jesus*. Old Testament quotations are CAPITALIZED.

CONTEXT DIGEST	
Location	Somewhere on the Road to Jerusalem
Timeline	March (Month 38)
Jesus' Life Context	Stage VII: Jesus' Ministry in Perea
	C. Jesus' Final Journey to Jerusalem
Title	I I. The Perils of Riches, and the Rewards of Faithfulness

COMMENT:

After the rich young ruler left Jesus in sorrow, the Lord made a sweeping' universal application out of the young man's failure. "**How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!**" The disciples thought that wealth was an indication of God's blessing on a righteous person. They were shocked by what Jesus said, but they should have known better.

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Jesus started his first extensive teaching session with the apostles (MT 5-7) with the Beatitudes. He began with: **"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."** (MT 5.3) In Luke's narrative of that teaching Jesus also said: **"Woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your reward."** (LK 6.24) The necessity of poverty of spirit, and the perils of riches were fundamental teachings of Jesus. This begs the question: why do riches become a barrier to a relationship with God so easily?

The riches and poverty that Jesus talked about was "in spirit"--a matter of inner attitudes and values. Self-sufficiency is the heart of a "rich" attitude. Rich people have all the material belongings they want at their disposal, and much more. They do not have to depend upon anyone for material sufficiency. Spiritual self-sufficiency is the essence of pride.

On the other hand, personal insufficiency is the heart of a "poor in spirit" attitude. Disciples of Jesus understand that their LORD is the Creator, Owner, and Controller of everything. They have and are nothing in themselves. As Jesus said: **"Apart from me you can do nothing."** Recognition of our personal insufficiency is the starting point for receiving everything we need from God as our Provider and Sustainer.

Material possessions, especially an abundance of them, so easily deceive us into thinking that they belong to us, and reinforce the devastating sense of self-sufficiency. The more material abundance we experience in this life, the greater our tendency to rely upon ourselves, rather than on God. That is why Jesus said it is virtually impossible for a "rich in spirit" person to have a relationship with God. Self-sufficiency (pride) is the sworn enemy of dependance upon God.

The rich young ruler was self-sufficient in the "riches" that kept him from depending on Jesus in saving faith. The tragedy was that his riches did not actually belong to him at all--they all belonged to Jesus in truth. The act of giving up all of his possessions was intended by Jesus to teach the young man that they did not actually belong to him the first place. Everything belongs to the LORD. We are managers of his resources. These twin truths are the basis of dependency upon, and sufficiency in God.

It is interesting to note that in just a few days another extremely "rich" person--Zaccheus-- would exhibit the poverty of spirit that leads to genuine faith in God. The only important difference between Zaccheus and the rich young ruler was their attitude toward their material abundance. The young man depended upon it; the tax collector didn't. Zaccheus therefore found his sufficiency in God, his true source of all riches, and joyfully entered into the kingdom as a result.

APPLICATION:

We live in the most materialistic age in history. Our dependance upon things is pervasive and considered to be "normal" in most cultures. We are all tempted daily by the self-sufficiency delusion.

What form does your own tendency toward self-sufficiency (riches) take? How will you combat its influence?

How has God taught you to depend upon him as your sole sufficiency? How can you cultivate your personal poverty of spirit more?