**Is it Possible?**

October 10, 2021

Hosea 5: 6-7, 10-15 Russell Mitchell-Walker

Mark 10: 17-31

The devil was on the prowl one day out to get the Christian. When he saw the Christian he shot one of his fiery darts and it struck the Christian in the chest. The Christian had on the breastplate of righteousness so he wasn’t harmed. The devil shot at the Christian’s head but that was protected by the helmet of salvation. The devil figured everyone has an Achilles’ heel, so he shot at the Christian’s feet that were shod with the gospel of peace so no harm was done. The Christian smirked and turned around to walk away. The devil fired an arrow into the Christian’s wallet and killed him.

While we may not relate to the imagery in this story, both with regard to the devil and the armour, the message is still important – when it comes to money, as Christians we are vulnerable and it is something we too often don’t want to talk about. Yet, about 40 percent of what Jesus had to say in the Gospels was about money or economics, often challenging the gathering of wealth, or supporting the poor. Todays gospel reading is one of the more challenging ones.

Jesus is heading out on his journey to Jerusalem. The subtext here, that we and Jesus knows, is that it is a journey to the cross, to his death. A man runs up to him and stops him on his way, kneeling before him saying “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life”? And Jesus responds “why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone.” We were discussing this passage in our Congregational Care meeting opening and questioned this part. Don’t we, doesn’t Jesus believe we are Good? Didn’t God say when everything was created that it was Good? I came across this background which I found very helpful, in David Ewarts’ [commentary](https://www.holytextures.com/2009/10/mark-10-17-31-year-b-pentecost-23-28-sermon.html) website, Holy Textures:

By his birth, Jesus was born among the lowest of the low in his society. By birth, no one has a lower social standing than Jesus. And in Jesus' time it was completely shameful and dis-honourable to seek to acquire a higher status than one was born into. However, it was possible that **OTHERS** could hold you in higher honour and status.

But there is still one more step in the honour-dishonour dance. If/when others held you in higher honour, the only honourable response was humbleness, and rejecting any public displays of such honouring.

So when the man runs up and publicly honours Jesus, Jesus honourably rejects such honourific behaviour. Which of course immediately demonstrates what a wise and honourable person Jesus is. And thereby, raises his standing in the eyes of all who witnessed this.

Jews understood God is good and avoided using the word ‘good’ for people lest they be charged with blasphemy. The man’s question is also problematic in using the word *inherit*. When we think of when we inherit something, it is usually about inheriting the wealth from another and which was only received by a family relative who had wealth and in Jesus’ time it went to the oldest son. We learn this is a wealthy man, who knows about these things and wants to become the eldest son to inherit eternal life. Yet eternal life is a free gift from God. This man has gotten off to a bad start. Jesus then does not challenge him when he says he has kept since his youth, all the commandments Jesus names. By this point Jesus knew what he needed, and having compassion and love for him, tells him that he needs to sell all he has and give it to the poor and then follow him. The man goes away sad, as he as wealthy and had many possessions.

It is important to note here, that Jesus is asked this or a similar question (what must I do to be saved) many times in the gospels and each time he is asked, the response is different, depending on the person. For example, for Nicodemis, he was to be born anew, for the lawyer in Luke 10, it was to love your neighbour, the Samaritan, in challenging greatness, in the previous chapter, it was to become like children. For this rich young man, he needed to let go of his material possessions which were preventing him from living wholly and caring for others. While this message can be considered specific to this person, Jesus does continue and name that it will be impossible for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God and also adds that with God all things are possible. We still seem to have trouble with this and raise questions about what Jesus was really saying. There is a myth that the eye of the needle is a low gate in Jerusalem that camels had to have all their packs removed and kneel down to get through – but there is no proof that such a gate ever existed. We wonder, if he or we give away all our possessions, then he and we would be poor too - certainly that isn’t what God or Jesus wants? So we are confused and perplexed like the disciples.

The fact of the matter is, that it is difficult to be faithful when we are only focused on financial gain, profits and success. Too often attaining wealth and maintaining it can become such a focus in our lives that we can forget about loving our neighbour and miss how climbing the ladder is at the cost of those the ladder is built on or under. We have built a system that not only does not care for the poor, but too often keeps the poor, poor, or makes them poorer. This was the message of Knox Metropolitan Church and the Regina Anti-Poverty Ministry in the [news](https://leaderpost.com/news/local-news/knox-met-organizing-talk-to-address-issues-of-poverty-and-homelessness-in-regina) this week and the session they offered on Wednesday. In the article of the Regina Leader Post, Peter Gilmer of RAPM identified that the new Saskatchewan Income Support Program gives those on social assistance less than what they received previously. Those on this program will receive just above $10,000/year when the poverty line for a single person in Regina is $22,416. So, the system doesn’t even provide half of what is needed to get a person to the poverty line, and the poverty line is still bare bones living. There are enough resources available to address the needs in our community, but there are not the systems or supports in place and some would say the political will. This is a collective responsibility that all of us need to work on together - community, political levels of government, private sector, and church. We will hear from RAPM about these issues at our community dinner on October 21. I also encourage you to watch the [presentation](https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch_permalink&v=963649540868504) on Knox Met’s Facebook page discussing these issues. Jesus says that with God all things are possible. It is not that God makes it happen, but that God with and through us it is possible. We are not alone in these issues and struggles. When we work with God, prayerfully and faithfully, things can happen.

As we consider these issues of money and our response, we also enter into our Stewardship Campaign this week, where we invite you to consider the resources you and we have, the gratefulness you may have for what you experience in and from this community of Eastside, and consider what generosity you are able to offer to support the ministry of Eastside. The Gratitude Team encourages you to pick up your package after church and review the materials and we invite you to consider prayerfully your response to support Eastside, which may be through time, talent or treasure, or any combination of those.

As we consider these issues, may we be open to what God is calling us to and the challenges to create a more equitable community where all have enough. May we engage in the issues to challenge ourselves to get through the eye of the needle, and address the disparities that we experience in our community. May we consider what we can offer to this community so we can continue to offer ministry and carry out our mission as we seek to be faithful.