

If you want a cold dose of reality, read Ecclesiastes. A harsh description of the futility of “life under the sun,” the life of riches, pleasure, leisure, everything that we think we want ...and what we think will ultimately make us happy. And no matter what, no matter what riches, no matter what good fortune comes your way, no matter how much you don't stink, and you have what you want – a life that is no centered upon Christ will never fulfill, will never satisfied you, will always end in destruction. Ecclesiastes. King Solomon, a man of power, riches, possessions, wealth, wine, women, you name it, Solomon had it. He'd been there, done that, and has the T-shirt to show it. He summarizes the life of wealth in a single word: Vanity. Emptiness. Nothing. Chasing after the wind.

And before any of you start thinking you're not wealthy because you didn't make or inherit millions or win the lottery, all of you, everyone of you live in wealth and luxury that 99% of anyone in the history of the world ever born - wish they had.

Then there's that rich young ruler we heard about last week; wanted to know what good thing he had to do to inherit eternal life. The one whom Jesus told: **go home, sell his possessions, give the money to the poor and follow me.** What must you do to inherit eternal life? You can't do it, even if all your money is given away. You might as well ask what you must do to inherit the crown of England. Then, Jesus commented to His disciples, **how difficult to enter the kingdom of God! Easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.**

The disciples shocked. **Who can be saved?** Peter tried some persuasion. “Look, Lord, we left everything and followed you. That should count for something?” Jesus says, “Sure. **There's no one who has left house, family, 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.** Did you catch that? **With persecutions.** A hundred times, the fruit of the Gospel for generations of children of faith, in homes, family, lands, that even reached, extends to you, your home -with persecutions. The Kingdom bears fruit and persecutions will come. Life with Christ always comes with the cross, not wealth or success measured by the world.

Children, (this is for you too) **how difficult to enter the kingdom of God. Easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom.** Solomon wrote, **Everyone to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them...this is the gift of God.** Wealth comes from the generous hand of God. And yet

Ecclesiastes also warns that wealth and possessions are vanity, emptiness, meaninglessness. Where is your wealth?

With this statement, Jesus preaches the entire OT and NT, answering both the rich man and disciples. **With man it is impossible, but not with God. For with God all things are possible.**

Martin Luther said: ***Riches are the pettiest and least worthy gifts which God can give a man. How can you compare riches to your health or your family; how can you compare wealth to the gifts of wisdom and understanding; what can compare to the value of God's Word and Sacraments given to you.*** What good was Apple founder Steve Jobs wealth when he had cancer and died? Jobs was given immeasurable wealth at Christ Lutheran Church in Palo Alto CA, raised, confirmed there; but indications during his days, he rejected the wealth, the life God desired to give him. Fortunes of the world are worthless treasures.

St. Lawrence, prominent figure in the Church, the year 258, the Roman emperor, in need of funds, require Lawrence to gather up the treasures of the church, all the valuables, and bring to his court. So Lawrence gathered up the treasures of the church, loaded it up, brought it in. He came into the court, brought in the church's treasures - all the people, the poor, the disabled, suffering people the church was serving. Lawrence would be taken away, burned, martyred. Our Lord's kingdom, true treasures aren't found in "things" of this world. **With man it's impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God.** That's pure grace. Christ says, Don't trust in your own efforts, but in mine. I kept the law perfectly for you because you can't; My work at the cross is yours, so that you don't have to suffer, die for your sin. You can't save yourself, can't even forgive 1 little sin; but I can. **I make all things new and give you the kingdom.**

In a few moments, you get to see this love in action again, the Lord comes to you in His Supper, doing something far greater **than putting a camel through the eye of a needle** - putting His body into your mouth, pouring His blood over your sin-parched lips, thus giving life to the dead, forgiveness to the sinful, salvation to the poor. **What must I do to inherit eternal life?** Nothing but receive. Be emptied of yourself in repentance, be filled with Him. Your life, your only wealth, your only treasure is Christ. Only the poverty of Christ gives you this inheritance, in His death and resurrection. You are the wealthiest people who've ever lived, people of His Church, for all else is useless, vanity. You belong to Him, the entire wealth of His kingdom, inheritance is poured out, given to have you. Your treasures awaits you in heaven. and even now it is yours, even given to you here in this place.