

一件不可能的事 ——马可福音 10:23-28

An Impossible Thing — Mark 10:23-28

Introduction / Outline

- Scripture reading: Mark 10:17-28; Romans 8:1-11
Mark 10:23-28
23 And Jesus, looking around, said to His disciples, “How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!” 24 The disciples were amazed at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, “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 a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” 26 They were even more astonished and said to Him, “Then who can be saved?” 27 Looking at them, Jesus said, “With people it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God.” 28 Peter began to say to Him, “Behold, we have left everything and followed You.”
- Examples of the impossible: You can't lick your own elbow; you can't tickle yourself (no matter how hard you try); you can't sneeze with your eyes open; you can't slam a revolving door... Former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill once said, "There are three impossible things for me to do. One, climb a wall leaning toward me. Two, kiss a girl leaning away from me. Three, speak to a group on a subject about which they know more than I do."
- The disciples, influenced by the Pharisees long enough, **always** felt they **had at least some ability to contribute to their own salvation**, to do something that would grant them eternal life. In today's Scripture, Jesus is going to correct this error.
- Outline:
 - Title: An Impossible Thing (vv. 23-28)
 - 1. Background: Rich Young Ruler's Failure (vv. 17-22)
 - 2. Impossible! Rich People Can't Enter the Kingdom (vv. 23-25)
 - 3. Impossible! Nobody Can Enter the Kingdom (vv. 26-27a)
 - 4. Impossible, Yet God Can Do It! (vv. 27b-28)

Background: Rich Young Ruler's Failure (vv. 17-22)

- “But at these words he was saddened, and he went away grieving”: The rich young ruler did not inherit eternal life because Jesus gave him an impossible command: to sell all his possessions and give it to the poor. There's nothing difficult with the actual procedure; but for this young man, it was just impossible to do. Because the power required for this isn't of the world or the flesh; it was of heaven and the spirit. Only the power that comes from above, from the Holy Spirit, can enable a person to give up everything to follow Jesus.

- “for he was one who owned much property”: His property was the treasure of his heart, and that’s why he couldn’t give it up. What is the treasure of your heart? Money, wisdom, power, experience, reputation, status...?

Jeremiah 9:23-24 “Thus says the Lord, Let not a **wise man** boast of his wisdom, and let not **the mighty man** boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that **he understands and knows Me**, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,” declares the Lord.”

John 17:3 “**This is eternal life**, that they may **know** You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”

【Principle】 For true Christians, **knowing** God is **the only treasure we pursue in our hearts**. Notice the **two kinds of treasure** in this passage: true treasure of knowing God, and false treasure that keeps one from knowing God.

Impossible! Rich People Can’t Enter the Kingdom (vv. 23-25)

- “How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!” : An exclamation that expresses Jesus' personal sadness over the lost souls and at the same time also raises a question to provoke the disciples' thoughts. The tragedy of the rich young ruler reveals an important spiritual truth, one that the disciples still do not take seriously enough! And that truth is:

【Key Point】 The more wealth one has (all kinds of things that keep people from knowing God), the harder it is for him to be saved into the kingdom of heaven!

【Historical Background】 According to the religious thought of the Jews at that time, the wealthier a person is, the easier for him to enter the kingdom of God. Because, 1) they saw wealth itself as solid proof of God's blessing (the theology of Job's three friends); 2) wealth was also seen as a means to do good deeds, and the more good deeds one does (including sacrifices and giving), the more qualified he is to enter the kingdom of God. A rabbi once said, "It is good to do alms rather than to treasure up gold, for alms deliver from death, and this will purge away every sin."

- “The disciples were amazed at His words”: Jesus' words came as a big shock to the disciples' whole worldview! This once again shows us how deeply they were influenced by the Pharisees, despite now having new lives marked by repentance and following Jesus.
- “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God!”: Another big shock, just to wake them up to reality. The term "children" implies they were already children of God, yet they had no clue how they came to be. When Peter says, “we have left everything and followed You” (v. 28), he likely still had a wrong view that somehow they got themselves into the kingdom by leaving everything behind.
- “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God!”: It was a common idiom to say "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle" in reference to something absolutely impossible. A rich man simply cannot enter the kingdom of God, is what Jesus meant.

From a practical perspective, there are at least three reasons why it is harder for a rich person to be saved than an average person. First, wealth can provide a **false sense of security**, making one feel that

all is well (cf. 1 Timothy 6:17). Second, the heart of a rich person is easily **drawn to the world**, desiring the things of the world (cf. James 5:5). Third, in the context of that time, wealth was commonly **regarded as evidence of God's favor**, giving false assurance that the rich person is good and godly.

However, even rich people CAN be saved and enter the kingdom of heaven! Remember Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector, in Luke 19:1-10!

【Conclusion】 Here, Jesus isn't saying that rich people absolutely cannot be saved; rather, he's asking, if anyone is saved, how are they saved? Is it by their wealth, virtues, merits, or any actions they boast of? Or is it **by God unilaterally performing a miracle that is utterly impossible for humans to do?**

【Application】 This truth will **greatly purify your worship, removing all hidden pride and boasting from your heart, focusing your boasting solely on God.** Of course, we should strive to do all that we ought to do, but we have no credit whatsoever; it's all God's doing. All sin and bad stuff are ours, while all virtues and good things are given to us by God through Jesus. This is true worship. Such worship is **inwardly** characterized by **deep humility, repentance, joy, and gratitude**, leading to outward actions that glorify God and benefit others.

Impossible! Nobody Can Enter the Kingdom (vv. 26-27a)

- “They were even more astonished”; They just cannot bear the shocking truth that “a rich man cannot enter the kingdom of God”.
- “Then who can be saved?”: Can you feel their panic? Perhaps they are starting to doubt their own salvation, worrying if they can truly be saved. They compare themselves to the young rich man and find themselves lacking in every aspect. Here’s someone who’s young and successful, wealthy, morally noble, and well-regarded—if such a person cannot enter the kingdom of heaven, how can we? **The disciples made the mistake of judging salvation by outward appearance.**

【Analogy】 "So-and-so is always nice and kind and doing good deeds, and he’s going to hell just because he doesn't believe in Jesus? Such-and-such has a bad character, and he gets to go to heaven just because he believes in Jesus?" Many people, when it comes to salvation, immediately start to compare behavior, as if behavior can determine **who is more worthy to be saved.** Ultimately, this is a gross misunderstanding of salvation, completely flipping it on its head. **Salvation is given precisely to the unworthy**, not to the worthy!

- “Looking at them”: "Look" can be translated as "gaze", a stronger tone, indicating deliberate and intense eye contact, expressing a very serious and earnest attitude. Jesus used this gaze to tell them: This is an extremely important truth; you must listen carefully!
- “With people it is impossible”: An impossible task. If we were to judge by appearance, the result is quite straightforward—no one could be saved.

【Principle】 This puts everyone on the same starting line, no one being ahead of anyone else. In terms of relationship with God, everyone starts out from the same place: thoroughly defiled by sin from birth, falling short of God's glory, unable to obey God or do any good deed according to God's standard, and unworthy of any grace or mercy from God, deserving only eternal punishment in hell!

Impossible, Yet God Can Do It! (vv. 27b-28)

- “but not with God; for all things are possible with God”: What great news! I'm so grateful that God can do all things, aren't you grateful? If it weren't so, we would all be doomed, with no hope of salvation whatsoever.

Jeremiah 32:17: "Ah Lord God! Behold, You Yourself have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for You,"

John 1:13: "who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."

John 3:3: "... unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

【Conclusion】 Only God can give people the saving faith.

【Application】 The Bible not only teaches that salvation is the work of God alone, but also that everyone needs salvation, that everyone must repent and believe in the Lord, and that Christians must preach the gospel. When preaching the gospel, we must indeed invite others to repent and believe in the Lord, even though we know they have no ability to do so. We must invite them to do what they cannot do because we believe God can do it, that He can instantaneously grant repentance and faith through the gospel message we proclaim. However, once they did repent and believe in Jesus, we must tell them immediately: you are not saved by your own act of repentance and faith, but by God who has granted you saving grace which enabled you to repent and believe in Him. This is not your work but God's. However, before they're saved, we must persistently remind them that they have both a moral obligation to repent and believe in Jesus and a real need for the forgiveness of sins and salvation. These are facts that they cannot avoid.