

Title: It's Tough Being Rich
 Text: Mark 10:17-27
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 Place: Decatur Church of God
 Theme: Journey With Jesus

Introduction: I saw a cartoon in the Leadership Journal the other day. A man is standing in the background as his wife speaks to the pastor.

She is saying, "If you promise he won't have to say anything, sing anything, or give anything, Harvey is ready to become a member."

Doesn't that sum up our struggles with committing to Christ?

Do you remember the musical "The Music Man"? Professor Harold Hill is selling musical instruments and he has convinced most of the townspeople that they will learn how to play the instruments using "the think system."

No actual practice, no attempting to play any notes, just think the melody line.

Of course, it doesn't work!

And it doesn't work for the Kingdom of God either!

Mark 10:17-27

As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

18 "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good--except God alone. 19 You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.'"

20 "Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy."

21 Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

22 At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

23 Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!"

24 The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵It 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 The disciples were even more amazed, 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 possible with God."

* Simon Critchley in "The Book of Dead" writes, "A detailed national survey...from 2003 claimed that fully 92 percent of Americans believe in God, 85 percent believe in heaven and 82 percent believe in miracles. But the deeper truth is that such religious belief...brings believers little solace in the face of death. The only priesthood in which people really believe is the medical profession and the purpose of their sacramental drugs and technology is to support longevity, the sole unquestioned good of contemporary Western life. Christianity, in the hands of a Paul, an Augustine or a Luther, is a way of becoming reconciled to the brevity of human life and giving up the desire for wealth, worldly goods, and temporal power...[But many Christians today] are actually leading desperate atheist lives bounded by a desire for longevity and a terror of [death]."

I. **People want to know about life.**

Mark 10:17

As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit ~~eternal~~ life?"

- A. What was he really asking?
1. Security
 2. Success
 3. A fulfilling life
 4. This would catch our ears

* According to the commentaries the running approach of the man, and the act of falling on his knees before Jesus was an indication that he was seeking spiritual guidance.

- B. This man's question indicated that he viewed eternal life as something to be achieved by doing good and also that he felt insecure about his future destiny.

* Philosophically the question "what is the meaning of life?" is still important to us. The answer leads us to the next step...what comes after it? Is there something more; I want there to be something more.

II. **The basics, we know.**

- A. For those us who have been raised around the church the answer is simple.
1. We believe in heaven
 2. Accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior
 3. Turn from serving yourself and serve Him
 4. Become a true disciple of Jesus

* We say that we believe in God, we believe what he says is true, and we believe that what he tells us about heaven is for us. We trust him...AMEN?

We trust Him for heaven but not for the vehicle that takes us there.

B. The rich man knew the basics.

Mark 10:19-20

19 You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.'"

20 "Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy."

* His spiritual teachers had been giving him good leadership. They taught him well. He did not murder, commit adultery, steal, lie, defraud, or dishonor his parents. This was good!

III. **Usually there is one thing that we lack.**

A. The rich man fell short.

1. Too much dependence upon his wealth.
2. More faith in his wealth than in God.

* Every year at Christmas we read, hear, or see the story of Ebenezer Scrooge. Here was a man who truly loved his wealth. He didn't want the things that money could buy he just wanted the money. But through a special Christmas Eve, he was confronted with his true loss and he recanted of his miserly ways.

B. What is the one thing that you may lack?

1. Of course, it could be wealth...for some.
2. Is it our dependence upon security?

* My grandparents and my mother and father when they were younger experienced the struggles of the depression. They saw the days when pay for work was minimal, food was scarce, and a lot of resources were hard to find.

Now I see hoarders that save everything, not because it is necessary, but because they remember.

* It is easy for congregations to remember. It becomes difficult for them to step out in faith and so they limit God to only what he has already provided.

3. Are we trusting in our technology?
4. Are we trusting in our savings?

Mark 10:21

Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

IV. How hard it is to give up that one thing.

* What is your favorite possession or favorite activity in life?

We tease my Dad about a 1977 Buick LeSabre that sits in his garage. It has about 80,000 miles on it and is worth more today than it was when he bought it brand new.

Our favorite "dig" is about who will get the Buick when he's gone.

- A. The issue with the rich man wasn't really money.
 1. It was an issue of trust or faith.
 2. Without the money his life might be turned upside down.
 3. What would he do without his security blanket?
 4. Unfortunately the rich man chose poorly.

Mark 10:22

At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

- B. Will you go away sadly today?
 1. What is your one thing?
 2. Do you really trust God?

* You trust him at death; can you trust him with your life?

* I've known people whose one thing was their money, I've known people whose one thing was their family, or their home, or their hobby, or their work, or even their church.

Is your confidence in the work you do for the church or is it in Jesus Christ?

* Jesus tells us that the choice is difficult but real salvation is impossible.

V. **Without God's help, it is impossible.**

A. Doing it on our own is insufficient.

1. Confidence in our own abilities is not enough.
2. Buying our way in is not enough.
3. Human ingenuity falls far short.

Mark 10:27

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

* How would you have felt if you were Moses facing the Red Sea? You have hundreds of thousands of people depending on you and Pharaoh's army is just about to overtake and destroy you.

You do not have the soldiers to stand against the Egyptian might. There are no boats. It looks hopeless.

Then Moses does as he has been told and holds his staff out over the water and God steps in to finish the job.

B. The Rich Man didn't realize that Jesus was about to step in and finish the job.

1. He left saddened not knowing the possibilities of God.
2. He missed experiencing the majesty, might, and magnificence of God at work.

Will you?

Conclusion: It's tough being rich when it gets in the way of experiencing Jesus. It's tough when anything gets in the way.

How about it? Are you going to let Jesus perform the impossible today or will you leave this sanctuary saddened because you cannot release the one thing that you really love and trust more than God?

Joshua said it this way...

Joshua 24:15

*And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: **but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.***