

“Credo, Domine; adjuva incredulitatem meam,” Mark 9:24.

“Domine, volumus Jesum videre,” John 12:21.

MARK 10

¹⁷ As Jesus was setting out on a journey, one man ran up to him and knelt in front of him. He asked, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

¹⁸ Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except one—God. ¹⁹ You know the commandments. ‘You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not give false testimony. You shall not defraud. Honor your father and mother.’”

²⁰ The man replied, “Teacher, I have kept all these since I was a child.”

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

²² When he heard this, he looked sad and went away grieving, because he had great wealth. ²³ Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it will be for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!”

²⁴ The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus told them again, “Children, how hard it is for those who trust in their riches 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 one another, “Who then can be saved?”

²⁷ Jesus looked at them and said, “For people, it is impossible, but not for God, because all things are possible for God.”



It’s that look that puzzles me. “Jesus looked at him and loved him.” Jesus searched his soul and looked into his books. He was the accountant for his soul, not for his financials. But his soul Jesus found bankrupt.

In many places the Scriptures show that it’s more difficult for the rich to be saved, than the poor.

- Psa. 62:10, *If riches increase, set not your heart on them.*
- Col. 3:1, *Because you were raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.*

- 1 Tim. 6:10, *Instruct those who are rich in this present age not to be arrogant or to put their hope in the uncertainty of riches, but in the living God, who richly supplies us with all things for our enjoyment.*
- 2 Tim. 4:10, *Demas, because he loved this present world, has forsaken me and gone to Thessalonica.*

And in the text before us it sounds almost as though the rich should be utterly cut off from salvation.

So then why say Jesus **looked with love** on the rich? Certainly not because he was yet right with God. Certainly not because the rich young man was ready to hear good news. Certainly not to shake out his pockets and get anything from him. For contrary to popular belief, this rich young man wasn't actually rich. He had logged no credit with Christ. He was not dealing in the currency that saves to eternal life. His treasures were not in heaven, and he was bankrupt.

And this is just why Christ Jesus looked on him with love. Jesus Christ came to save souls. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is that though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, so that through His poverty we might become rich. Jesus had come for lost souls, seeking the sinner's best. He was there precisely to speak with the spiritually bankrupt. Hence ...

JESUS LOOKS WITH LOVE ON THE BANKRUPT SOUL

1. Love that is good and does right

Jesus refused the title "good" from the rich young man. Some who deny the divinity of Jesus, suggest that Jesus is saying He has not yet achieved the divine status. But that weighs the whole answer of Jesus down with baggage He never says. Jesus never denies being God. He challenges the rich young man to know just how good. Jesus wasn't always fond of being called a "good teacher," since He was far more than that. We may therefore say that Jesus rejects the description of "good" for the opposite reason that He wasn't yet God—**He is God!**

Love is direct with God's Law. So far the rich young man appraises himself with dutiful deeds. But his definition of "good" as well as his self-evaluation shows his dutiful deeds were done dirt cheap. This ties to the rich young man's question, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" One wonders if he was grandstanding, ready to answer that he has obeyed all the commands Jesus listed. He asks for that one great thing that will put his conscience at rest and secure eternal life.

If you think about it, Jesus answered the rich young man's initial question. Jesus did the right thing and was straightforward. All this wealth the young man had amassed, and he likely tied his financial success to his moral success. Now Jesus gives him the task that he asked, the one great thing that will make him an heir of eternity. He must hold that grand estate sale and divvy out his riches to the poor. Thus he would store up treasures in heaven and follow Jesus.

Jesus, who loves perfectly, gazes on the sinner who neither was good nor did right and left good undone with a wrong heart. In this gaze of love, Jesus not only searched the soul of a sinner who came up short. Jesus also loves that soul enough, to tell him that, though he were young, rich, and a great humanitarian, he's still not good enough. He has not yet measured up to God's expectations.

The Lord Jesus loved the rich enough to tell him when he is spiritually bankrupt.

This is always God's will—that every rich man be poor in spirit, acknowledge himself to be an unworthy sinner, and be nothing but a beggar before God. Sometimes the best mission work among the works-righteous is a constant question, "Have you done enough?" Heap that question up in piles, and the conscience will finally be crushed and the person will HAVE to look somewhere else for salvation. So Jesus opposed the stubborn will until it might break and make room for the good news.

2. Love that does the impossible

Dante calls this "the Great Refusal." It was within the power of rich young man to sell it all and follow the Lord, but instead he refused Jesus' offer, and according to Dante's *Inferno* enters the vestibule of hell. Of course, that's satire and fantasy. But "great refusal" isn't a bad name for this. Mark tells us the rich young ruler "*became sad and went away grieving.*" You should have seen the sullen look on this rich young man's face. Mark describes it more vividly than Matthew or Luke. Like brooding over unwelcome thoughts as if in a dark, stormy night, we learn in one word that gloom settled over the rich young man.

Again, Jesus gives a look, this time at each of His disciples. He laments "*how hard it is for the rich to enter God's kingdom,*" and this only brings the disciples to amazement. They figured the rich young ruler had it all together. He had done what they could not, and successfully amassed earthly wealth to prove it. How

could Jesus ***not*** accept the rich young man into His ranks and promote him to second-in-command? They would be relieved if they weren't so horrified that the Lord's idea of success and wealth weren't so unexpected, backwards, and apparently upside-down.

Popularly, preachers often compare the eye of a needle to a short sheepgate, called "Eye of the Needle," that the camel would have to offload and crouch to enter. However, there's no evidence of any gate called "Eye of the Needle." No commentator for over 1000 years understood Jesus as speaking about a gate. The narrow entryways some bible atlases and tour guides identify as the "Needle Gate" were built in the Middle Ages, and they likely received that name because of this pop-interpretation. It seems that Jesus was really saying that if a camel were a great big sweater, and you could pull the thread that causes it to unravel, you'd have better odds threading that through the hole of a needle than someone rich has getting to heaven (not to mention the messy business of chopping the meat and bones of a camel to force all of this through the needle, too).

So the disciples conclude that if one has better chances threading a camel through the eye of the needle, then *no one can be saved*. It is not only difficult for sinners to place their love and trust in God, and not in ourselves and our stuff. It's impossible.

So you see what is so different about faith and following the First Commandment, which none of us can do. Instead of claiming to be so good and right with God of our own accord, we learn here that only the Holy Spirit can cause a right relationship within us, "not by my own thinking or choosing." Faith is born of the Holy Spirit, not of obedience and human ability. Only the Lord can do the impossible—create in the sinner a clean heart and renew a right spirit.

Now, last problem: Does the Lord expect each of you to give up all your wealth, hand it over to the poor, and seek voluntary poverty? No, the Lord never commanded you to give up all your wealth, but He does command you to guard the door of your heart. The Lord Jesus wants you to use your riches right. Desiring God's blessings instead of God and disordering your loves (i.e., greed) robs you of the joys of good stewardship. Blessed are the rich who use their riches to become rich in good works. Unto them the Lord will say, "*Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world ... Just as you did it for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it for me.*" **Amen.**