

LENTEN DEVOTIONAL MARCH 17, 2016

The Rev. Dr. Scott Hagley, Assistant Professor of Missiology, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary

SCRIPTURE

MARK 10:17-31

17 As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, “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 but God alone. 19 You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honor your father and mother.’” 20 He said to him, “Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth.” 21 Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, “You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” 22 When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

23 Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!” 24 And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, “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 someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” 26 They were greatly astounded and said to one another, “Then who can be saved?” 27 Jesus looked at them and said, “For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible.”

28 Peter began to say to him, “Look, we have left everything and followed you.” 29 Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, 30 who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. 31 But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.”

DEVOTIONAL

“What must I do to inherit eternal life?” The question comes from a man bowing before Jesus, still heaving to catch his breath. The wealthy man catches Jesus just before his journey to Jerusalem. Jesus’ short response leaves the man in grief and the disciples perplexed. If a man with such wealth, intentionality, and moral certitude cannot be saved, then who can?

We find ourselves asking the same question today. Saturated with middle-class anxieties, we wonder whether Jesus really meant for the man to sell all he has, or what it means to leave family for the sake of God’s call. But Jesus’ response to the disciples rebukes their (and our) concerns. The wealthy man will not achieve God’s salvation; neither will we. The point is not where God draws the line for acceptable sacrifice, but rather the proximity and mobility of the disciple in relationship to the living Lord. Jesus asks: “will you go with me even to places of suffering, poverty, death?” The man’s wealth and the disciples’ family offer ready excuses to answer Jesus with a well-meaning “not yet.”

Verse 32 shows a small band of disciples walking behind Jesus in amazement and fear. Mark seems to suggest that this is eternal life; even better, this is the way of eternal life. Lent is about turning and returning to this way in repentance and belief. Let us find ourselves on the road and in our neighborhood with Jesus, wherever he may be heading.

PRAYER

(Psalm 27:1-5)

1 The Lord is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?

The Lord is the stronghold of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?

2 When evildoers assail me
to devour my flesh—
my adversaries and foes—
they shall stumble and fall.

3 Though an army encamp against me,
my heart shall not fear;
though war rise up against me,
yet I will be confident.

4 One thing I asked of the Lord,
that will I seek after:
to live in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life,
to behold the beauty of the Lord,
and to inquire in his temple.

5 For he will hide me in his shelter
in the day of trouble;
he will conceal me under the cover of his tent;
he will set me high on a rock. Amen.

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