

Has there ever been something that you've seen done that you thought was impossible?

For me I always said you wouldn't get me on a boat – in fact I think I used the word 'never'. You should never use the word 'never'. So then the year before COVID I took Alison on a cruise from Southampton to the Norwegian Fjords. 20 years ago I would have said it was impossible, but it's now done and I would say I would do it again.

In today's passage, Jesus is going to speak to the disciples about something that to them seemed impossible. However, Jesus will teach them that with God all things are possible. The passage before today's is quite important to lead in to verse 23. We learn of the wealthy young man who wanted to know how he could be good. Jesus told him to give up everything in order to follow Him. And we know that the man went away sorrowful because he was unwilling to give up his riches to follow Jesus.

In verse 23 & 24 *Jesus says to his disciples, "Truly I tell you, it will be hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven. 24 Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God."*

I suppose the important thing to start with is to acknowledge that Jesus does not have anything against people with money. Jesus is pointing to the fact that just like the wealthy young man from the previous passage, the issue is that those who have possessions must not hold on to those possessions and as a result refrain from devoting themselves to Jesus. In fact let's not exclude everyone of us. We must not allow anything to become more important than Jesus.

If we put anything before Jesus it will be hard for us to enter the kingdom of heaven. Jesus wants all of our devotion and He doesn't want anything between us and Him. Indeed, Jesus says that it would be easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.

So what does that mean - well a camel was the biggest animal in the land. The eye of a needle was the smallest opening one could imagine. And so Jesus is saying that this thing is extremely difficult, indeed impossible.

So what do we do? The disciples wondered this as well.

You see, the Jewish people, for the most part, believed that wealth was a sign of God's favour upon someone. Of course, we know that this is not necessarily the case. Just because someone is wealthy doesn't mean that God is pleased with that person. Likewise, just because someone is not wealthy does not mean that God is not pleased with that person. However, this is what some ancient Jewish people thought.

And so the disciples naturally ask in verse 25, ***"Then who can be saved?"***

And so Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

The disciples thought that if the rich didn't have a chance then none of us have a chance.

But let's consider that while there are particular challenges of loyalty that come along with having great wealth, the truth of the matter is there are challenges of loyalty for everyone of us. All of us battle with sins and temptations that compete with our affections that should be devoted exclusively to Jesus Christ. Scripture states that 'All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.' It is impossible for humanity to do anything good enough to get into the kingdom of God.

But thank God for the second half of verse 26, ***". . . with God all things are possible."***

With God, it is possible for a rich man to set aside his devotion to his possessions and instead devote himself to God and living for God's glory. With God, it is possible for a person controlled by pride and self-worship to turn to a life of humility and worship of the one true God. With God, it is possible for a person given over to lust and sexual sin to devote themselves to God and a life of purity. With God, it is possible for a church devoted to inward focus and inward living to turn instead to God's Word and God's mission and be devoted to outward focus and godly living. With God, all things are possible! There is nothing outside the sovereign power of God Almighty!

That takes us to our final point:

Peter was probably thinking, "Jesus, we aren't like the wealthy young man. We have been willing to leave all behind in order to follow you. What about us?" Well, let's see what takes place. As Peter normally does, he speaks up.

But Jesus gives Peter an answer that he is probably is not expecting.

First of all, Jesus says that He will renew all things. This is a beautiful promise that everything will one day be made new and good. Jesus will make all things new.

Second, Jesus says in verse 29 that those who devote everything to following him will receive a hundred times more. Everything that we give up to follow Jesus is well worth it.

If I asked most of you to give me a hundred pounds a day for ten days straight most of you would not want to make that sacrifice. You'd miss that money. However, if I promised you that after those ten days that thousand pounds would be multiplied a hundred times, most of you would be willing to make that sacrifice. I must clarify that the churches that promote giving to that extent in order that the church and the senior pastors receive more are a scam.

So finally, Jesus concludes this passage with the words, "But many who are first will be last, and the last first."

That is to say, many who sacrifice for Jesus may be looked down upon by the world. They may end up being poor, or meek, or viewed as foolish for how they use their resources. However, although they may be viewed as last in the eyes of the world, they will be viewed as first in the eyes of God. Their sacrifice for and faithfulness to Jesus will not only not be forgotten, it will also be rewarded. Likewise, all those who came first in the eyes of the world, if they don't invest in heavenly rewards, they will come last when God makes all things new. We can receive temporary blessings now, or we can experience heavenly blessings for eternity with Jesus. We need choose wisely.

It doesn't matter if we are rich or poor, it doesn't matter what colour our skin is, it doesn't matter where we are from, our political party doesn't matter, without Jesus there is no possibility of eternal life. Jesus changes everything. It is worth sacrificing everything to follow Jesus.

As you go from here today, challenge yourself to live out this passage this week in the following ways:

1. Prioritize your earthly treasures.

Make decisions this week to be humble, generous, and sacrificial for the things of God. Don't let anything in your life take the devotion that belongs to Jesus.

2. Invest in your heavenly treasures.

Make investments into the treasures that are promised for you in heaven. Show love to others, sacrifice for the cause of Christ, commit your life to serving Jesus, forsake the ways of the world. Invest in heavenly treasures.

3. Seek the greatest treasure.

Jesus is the greatest treasure you could ever seek after. Tell others about him.

