

A wise heart

 **Mark 10.17-31**

When a rich man asks Jesus what will guarantee him access to eternal life, he is hoping that he will be reassured that his lifelong obedience to the law is enough. But Jesus knows the man's heart and how attached he is to his wealth. He challenges him to take the one step that will give him the assurance he seeks. Jesus points out that this is a challenge for everyone.

Now read **Mark 10.17-31** see p.2 for text.

A note on the passage

The man is so sure of his worthiness that he runs to Jesus. He has found it easy to please God in his comfortable life. But how will he fare if he has nothing but the offer of treasure in heaven? What is comfortable about your life? What challenge might Jesus give to you about what you need to let go of?

WORK IT OUT

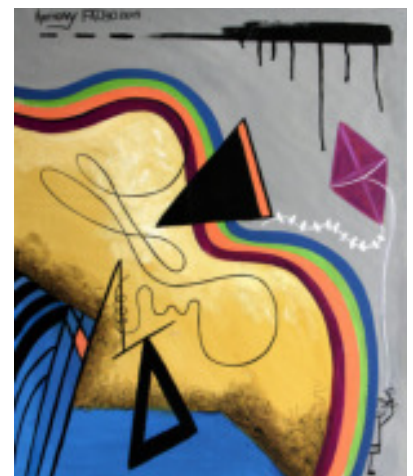
How good are you at following instructions? Are you helped or baffled by a recipe, or by a manual for a piece of equipment? There are laws which protect us, such as all driving on the same side of the road, and 'social rules' which enable us to interact with people without causing offence. During the Covid-19 crisis, did you keep two metres from others because the government told you to or to keep everyone safe? When the rich man in the Gospel reading suggested that following rules made him a 'good person', Jesus suggested a different way of measuring his behaviour. How do you feel about his advice?

HAGGLE!

Play a game based on an auction. Gather the family or a group of friends. Give each person a pile of golden autumn leaves (to represent 'wealth'). Show everyday household objects and ask for 'bids' (use larger and smaller items for variety). Discuss together why some things are more valuable than others. The value of some things cannot be expressed in money terms – can you think of any? Don't forget to put all the items back afterwards.



It is easy to lose an hour or two on emails, social media, games or TV. Keep a note of how much time you spend on such things in a day. The next day, exchange at least half of that time for a time of reading, praying, being quiet. How do you think God might feel that you have shared some time with him, that your focus has shifted?



Ask yourself: What do you make of this image – its title is 'With God all things are possible'?



Is it easier to give a little or a lot? Either on your own or with others, use your imagination. If you were given £1, how would you spend it? £10? £100,000? Does your way of thinking change as the number gets bigger? Would you start by spending it all on yourself first when it was a small or a large sum? What is the balance between generosity and greed? What informs your choices?



At the end of each day, think back over all you have done. Were there moments when you may have hurt God, others, or the planet? If not, then thank God for being with you and leading you in his path. If so, offer those things to God in prayer, and ask him to help you change your priorities and be aware of making choices that reflect your relationship with him.

Choose a version of the passage to read. The first is the ROOTS version for children, the second is the NRSV text which may be suitable for older children, young people and adults.

As Jesus was walking along the road, a man came running up to him. He fell down on his knees and began to ask Jesus a question. 'What must I do to have eternal life?'

Jesus looked at the man kneeling in front of him: 'You know the answer to that! You must obey God's laws.'

'I have obeyed God's laws all of my life,' replied the man.

Jesus looked at the man kneeling in front of him with love. He explained a little more. 'There is one more thing you must do. Go, sell everything you have, take the money and give it all to the poor. Then come and follow me.'

This made the man very upset. You see, he was very rich. He loved his money and his possessions more than he loved God. As the man got up and walked sadly away, Jesus turned to his disciples. He said, 'It is so hard for rich people to enter the kingdom of God.'

The disciples were shocked by this, so Jesus explained. 'Money can become more important to people than

loving God. More important than loving other people. It's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter God's kingdom.'



The disciples were even more confused and asked, 'How can anyone enter God's kingdom then?'

'Remember, with God, anything is possible,' Jesus replied. 'We left everything to follow you,' Peter said. 'Yes,' Jesus replied. 'And anyone who gives up things for me will be given a hundred times more. Those who appear to be important in the world are not important in God's kingdom. Those who seem unimportant in the world will be very important in God's kingdom.'

Mark 10.17-31

Did you know?

- Eternal life means fullness of life in God's presence, both now and after death.

Mark 10.17-31 (NRSV)

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?' Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. 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; Honour your father and mother."' He said to him, 'Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth.' 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.' When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions. 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!' 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! 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.' They were greatly astounded and said to one another, 'Then who can be saved?' Jesus looked at them and said, 'For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible.' Peter began to say to him, 'Look, we have left everything and followed you.' 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, 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. But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.'