

MARK 10:23-27

PUT DOWN YOUR BURDENS

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!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 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."

In Israel, it was believed that God intervened directly in the lives of men so that those who were rich and had many sons were being blessed because they were righteous. We see this in negative relief in the repeated laments of the psalms where the writer cries out to God, "Why do the wicked prosper?" So, the disciples probably react to this teaching as we would if Jesus had described the needle going through the eye of the camel. Their natural reaction was, if not the rich, then who? There may even have been an underlying hope that by following Jesus they would become prosperous.

Jesus' answer to their misdirected question was to point out that you cannot judge a person's righteousness on outward attributes like wealth. God judges on the inward attitudes of the person, be he wealthy or poor. In the present case, both for the rich man and the disciples, the matter of wealth was a barrier that had to be dealt with if they were to aspire to the kingdom. The problem is at our end, not God's. The only barrier to entry into the kingdom from God's side is our lack of faith. In as much as having anything or not having anything gets in the way of our faith in Jesus, it is a barrier to the kingdom. If we are to enter the kingdom, we must put our burdens down.

Jesus, through the Incarnation you came into the world naked and when you rose from the dead, you even left the grave clothes behind. Keep me ever mindful that I likewise was born with nothing and will leave this life with nothing. Help me to live this life without grasping onto any person, place or thing, so that my hands may be free to receive the gift of your kingdom. Amen.