

MARK 10:28-32a

## NOT RICH OR POOR, BUT FAITHFUL

<sup>28</sup> Peter said to him, “We have left everything to follow you!” <sup>29</sup> “I tell you the truth,” Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel <sup>30</sup> will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life. <sup>31</sup> But many who are first will be last, and the last first.” <sup>32a</sup> They were on their way up to Jerusalem, with Jesus leading the way, and the disciples were astonished, while those who followed were afraid.

Jesus presents three great paradoxes of the kingdom. First, disciples must give up ownership of all they have in order to gain everything there is. Second, by practicing goodness they will earn persecution in this life. And third, those who are first in this world will find themselves to be last in the kingdom.

The unifying key for understanding Jesus’ statements about the kingdom is the phrase, *for me and the gospel*. It is not the condition of being literally or figuratively poor, an orphan, homeless, persecuted or uncounted, but that the disciple becomes so as a consequence of his decision to follow Jesus. No one enters the kingdom of heaven because of his life condition. We can only become kingdom citizens through our faith in Jesus.

Perhaps you have material abundance, a large intact family and are afforded worldly esteem. Jesus’ teaching is that you give ownership where it is due – to God. That doesn’t necessarily mean a wholesale “giving it all away,” but rather a willingness to do so if the need arises. Most are called to be stewards and not monks. I can’t help remembering the words of Mordecai to Queen Esther: “...*who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?*” (Esther 4:14). Likewise, those who are poor, alone and lack the world’s affirmation are to use their life situation for God. It takes no material resources to pray for the kingdom, live lives that witness to the goodness of God or to serve a neighbor. While the danger for the rich is the focus on abundance, the pit-fall of the poor is the focus on their lack. In either case, our proper focus is to be on Jesus.

**Father, give me the strength to respond to your kingdom call in accord with your will. Protect me from the temptation to be something other than what you have created me to be. Help me to be “kingdom-wise” in my decision making and to make my decision to follow Jesus the guiding light of my life. Amen**