

**With God, nothing is impossible**

**Anne-Marie Jeffery**

**Mark 10: 17 - 31**

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What are we to do with this passage? It is a hard teaching to be sure. A man comes to Jesus wanting to know what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus tells him follow the commandments. You know - 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. The man replies and says, "All these I have kept since I was young." Jesus looked at him and loved him and tells him that he lacks one thing. Go and sell all that you own, give it to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven, then come follow me. The man went away shocked and grieving because he had many possessions which he was not ready give up. It is a heartbreaking story – a faithful man who wants to follow Jesus and finds what is asked of him to be too much.

What does this mean for us? Is Jesus asking us to sell all of our possessions and give them to the poor? Indeed, there are people who do so to one degree or another. I think about the monastic order of St. Francis who pledge to live a life of poverty or even one of my seminary professors who refused to buy any new clothes and shopped only at Goodwill.

How would the world work if we all sold our possessions and gave the money to the poor? And how rich do we have to be to qualify to be one of those who will have a hard time getting into kingdom of heaven? A millionaire, a billionaire or are all of us here today rich when compared to someone starving in Africa? I'm right with the disciples when they ask – Then who can be saved? Jesus responds for mortals it is impossible, but for God all things are possible.

I keep going back to one line in this passage which is this. Jesus looked at him and loved him. Another translation says Jesus looked carefully at him and loved him. I looked up the Greek word for 'look' and in this case it means not just a look, but to observe fixedly or to discern clearly. Another interesting thing to note is that in the Gospel of Mark, this is the only instance where Jesus loves someone. Jesus doesn't mock him or denigrate him. Jesus loves him and Jesus knows what is getting in the way of following God for him.

I wonder what it would be like if we thought about Jesus looking at us carefully, loving us and then telling us what we need to do. One commentator says the idea makes him shake in his boots and yet what might we be invited to if we do listen to Jesus. What wonderful way of being might we discover? What burden might be lifted from our shoulders?

I believe Jesus loves each and every one of us and looks at us carefully know what it is we need to leave behind or give away. While I think possessions get in the way of following Jesus for many of us, I think Jesus could tell this parable with many other examples. Give up the number of hours you spend at work or that crazy busy schedule that keeps you and your family going non-stop. Is it alcohol, overeating or another addiction that you need to leave behind? An affair? Not taking any time to pray? And we may cry out – Then who can be saved? Jesus responds, “For mortals it is impossible, but for God all things are possible.” Trust in that. Because the kingdom of God is given to us freely. It is we that get in the way relying on things of this world.

In our stewardship newsletter this week, there is an article is about Jonathan and Zack. Zack is an amazing craftsman who builds beautiful cabinetry. However, Zack cannot afford wood, but Jonathan has an unlimited supply of wood and loves his work so much that he gives 100 planks to Logan. He asks him to use one tenth of the wood to make cabinets for a poor family and to use the rest as he wishes. Well Zack had so much success with building cabinets that he never got around to building those for the family in need. Jonathan is disappointed but since he has an unlimited supply of wood, he gives him more. I leave you to read the rest of the story, but what I loved is how Jonathan keeps bringing the wood no matter what Zack does. That’s how the kingdom of God is. It is freely given and it is us that get in the way of receiving it with our possessions, additions and distractions.

Today in a quiet moment, place yourself in front of Jesus and feel that loving look. What is God calling you to leave behind? Trust in God and know that with God’s help, you can live into that way being that you may never thought possible. We can be freed from our burdens, because with God all things are possible.