

Mark 10:17-27 – Pentecost 21B - October 14, 2018  
Growth Group Series  
Who Do You Say I Am? The Seeker of Souls  
New Life Evangelical Lutheran Church – Shoreview, MN  
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*Mark 10:17 As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"<sup>18</sup> "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good-- except God alone."<sup>19</sup> You know the commandments: "Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother."<sup>20</sup> "Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy."<sup>21</sup> Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."<sup>22</sup> At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.<sup>23</sup> Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!"<sup>24</sup> The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God!<sup>25</sup> 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."<sup>26</sup> The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, "Who then can be saved?"<sup>27</sup> Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God."*

We continue our Growth Group Series: Who Do You Say I Am? This week...

Maybe it has happened to you. The rental car company didn't have enough cars on the lot so instead of the compact car they asked if they could upgrade you? That comes pretty close to being the definition of a no-brainer. Might even be nicer than your own vehicle. Nice way to start off a trip.

What if the rest of life was like that experience? You head to a restaurant for dinner and enjoy the best meal. The hotel or maybe bed and breakfast is everything you thought it would be and then some.

Sooner or later it's time to go back home, but how about going home to find that the good folks from Extreme Makeover – Home Edition have paid you a visit. They've actually relocated you to a

nice golf course lot. All the nicest hardwood floors, granite countertops and flat screen monitors everywhere you look. The master bath is the size of a waterpark, the pool in the backyard has a waterfall, there's immaculate landscaping, and oh yeah, full ride scholarships for whoever needs them and a lifetime membership at the golf course.

Oh wait, there's more. The Dow Jones suddenly hits a record high, and lo and behold, the broker you recently met turned what little you had invested into a tidy little nest egg that he has now diversified for you so that you can retire pretty much whenever you want.

Sounds fantastic doesn't it? Or did I forget something...ahh yes, the words of Jesus: **How difficult it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God.** ♦

The man who came up to Jesus that day was genuinely concerned about the right things. He **ran to Jesus, fell at his knees, and asked, What do I have to do to inherit eternal life?** The answer was what your conscience and your bible still tell you today: **Do** what God says when it comes to how you treat people. Without necessarily boasting, bragging or claiming perfection, the young man said, I've always done that. He'd been a respectable, genuinely decent person. I mean, how **good** is good enough? ♦

You see, there's a stinger in this account, a kicker. God doesn't require that you take a vow of poverty or that you give away everything you have to charity. He does require that nothing come between you and him, not your spouse, not your family, not your livelihood, not your favorite activity, not your money and not your possessions. The Lord will put up with an awful lot but one thing he won't take is second place. For as decent as he had been, the rich young man was in love with his stuff, not with God.

And don't think for a moment that Jesus couldn't just as easily have said, **it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a [poor] man to enter the kingdom of God.** Love for God gets pushed out of top spot just as easily through loving what you have as it does through wanting what you don't have. To be good enough for God would mean your love for God has never been surpassed by your love for anything and anyone else. ♦ It would mean a heart devoted 100% to God, so that you never once faltered in your devotion to him, never once sinned. No matter how nice of a person or how decent and hardworking you've been, you haven't been good enough. **No one is good, except God alone.** ♦

And as much as I may sometimes think it and act like it, I'm not God. And, spoiler alert, neither are you. That leaves us on the outside of God's kingdom looking in, disqualified by an impure heart. And even though we typically point out how the disciples *didn't* get things, this time they did. **Who then can be saved?** ♦ They asked. Oh, they got it – do we?

My friends, if that word *impossible* stands, you and I are lost. ♦ We land in hell. It is impossible for people like us to enter the kingdom of God (needle). Our hearts haven't loved God first and best and most. The man that day went away sad, the disciples were completely flustered, but one **good** person was still standing there – the man who is also God. He would not let any of us be lost. As Jesus said to another rich man - to Zacchaeus - he said, **For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.** ♦

What was God's Son Jesus doing in a manger? What was he doing in the temple at age 12, engrossed with God's house and God's Word? He was being **good**. Healing the sick, resisting Satan's every temptation, preaching God's Word – he was being **good**. No lust in his heart, no gossip on his

lips, no greed in his mind. Trusting God to provide for him, doing God's will in his daily life, loving God above all else with all his heart – he was being **good** because you and I couldn't. He was being **good** for God for you.

In fact, he was the only one who was truly **good** enough, indeed perfect enough, to offer his life to God as a substitute for others, to pay for sin, all sin, all of your sin, all of mine. He did that on a Friday, on a cross. And in so doing, he answered the young man's question, **What must I do to inherit eternal life?** You don't do anything to inherit something. You get something for free when someone dies, simply because you're named in the will.

You see, when Jesus died in your place and rose again, there was a reading of a will. Jesus declared to you, I leave you my holy birth, my obedience to my parents, my resistance of the devil, my trust in God, my doing of his will, my perfect and pure love for God. I bequeath to you and leave to you my holiness, which alone makes you **good** for God. This is what he gives to those he has sought. This is what he leaves to those he has bought. This is what is yours – an inheritance of eternal salvation, a treasure beyond measure, ♦ an impossibility made possible with God.

So, you can be *content* with the car, the fine food, the boat, the home and the portfolio as blessings from God, or you can *keep working* to have such things as blessings from God, but love them *more* than God and you'll perish with them. It is impossible *for us* to be good on our own, **but nothing is impossible with God.** ♦ He has sought you, he has found you, and in a manner of speaking, he has put you on a camel, pulled you through the eye of that needle, and now welcomes you into his kingdom of grace. And that makes you truly rich now and rich forever. Amen.