

October 14, 2018

Mark 10:17-31

This is a hard reading to accept

Wish I could say Jesus didn't mean that way

Want to interpret in way that lessens the blow

Many people point out if everyone did it there would be no food, clothes, or shelter

Well, in 2,000 years no ground-swell of multitudes doing this, and we know why

It is impossible!

Well, not really impossible – Jesus did it

But, Jesus' faith is radical, uncompromising, a total commitment to God

- trusted food, clothes, needs would be met
- lived homeless, penniless
- went to cross rather than give in

So, I have no doubt Jesus meant what he said

If we take Jesus seriously, then we share his disciples dismay, "Then who has any chance at all?"

Jesus' response is blunt: "No chance at all if you think you can pull it off by yourself. Every chance in the world if you let God do it."

What?

Perhaps, entering God's realm is not what you do or don't do, it is about trusting in God, about acting on that trust

Not what you do or don't do, rather about why – radical love for God, Creator, Source of Life, our Connection

Can't say whether Jesus thought we are capable of such faith, such trust, but he did expect us to try

Look how far his disciples went with their trust

(They proved Jesus right. Not only did the followers gain family and friends, they also gained troubles.)

Nonetheless, from what is recorded in the Bible, they were a very happy, non-anxious lot

Most people know, on some level, what is behind Jesus command to sell all you have:

Possessions are responsible for a lot of our grasping, our holding on to things, our anxious fear of not keeping up

We measure success by our possessions – the one with the most toys wins

Jesus counters this with: first will end up last, and the last first.

Possessions get in the way of letting go and trusting that what we have is enough, letting go and sharing generously from what we have.

Bottom line: Take Jesus' words seriously.

It is a challenge to check your life's pulse:

- Do you possess your possessions, or do they possess you?
- Is your loyalty to God and service of neighbor, or the maintenance of your possessions?
- How are you doing with the giving of time, talent, and wealth to the benefit of something other than yourself?

If you want to enter God's realm, to know the peace of God that passes all understanding, then the only chance you have of entering is to be willing to grasp less and give more.

Easy? No way! If it were easy, everyone would be doing it.

Worth it? Every time I have been able to "let go and let God" my mental health has improved greatly.

The rich man in today's reading heard Jesus words and "and he walked off with a heavy heart. He was holding on tight to a lot of things, and not about to let go."

The disciples stayed, and followed.

Jesus is the goal. We must choose if we want to try to follow or walk off with a heavy heart.

Since I am not perfect and I fall short of the glory of God on a regular basis, my choosing to follow is

with this caveat: I am not selling everything I have and giving it away, but I will try to be more generous than I have been in the past, and then try to grow my generosity.

My experience with this is that as I have increased my giving, miraculously, I have still been able to pay my bills. My trust is limited, but I am trying to expand the trust.

Not to test God, but to challenge myself.

The challenge being to trust in God, who is Life and Love, in all things.

And as I stretch to give more, I find my fears lessen and my trust grows.

I am not Jesus Christ. In fact, I am a long way away from the goal. But I have had glimpses of God's realm, which, in the face of the disciples' question, gives me hope that everyone has a chance.

Including me. Amen.