

I have trouble just getting thread to go through the eye of a needle. And now we're talking camels? Yet there are plenty of people who try. Like the rich man just prior to our text. He wanted in. Into God's kingdom. "Then give away your riches," Jesus told him, "and follow Me." But he could not part with his wealth, and so he walked away. I guess he went out to buy a camel. Because if he wasn't going to enter the Kingdom of God with Jesus, the only other way in was by pushing that camel through the eye of a needle.

Now do not think that Jesus is condemning riches here; that unless we give away all that we have we, too, will have to go the camel route into God's kingdom. Money is not the root of all evil, but the *love of money*.

Abraham was wealthy. Much more so, I'm sure, than that rich man. But Abraham loved God, not his riches. He had plenty of camels. But he did not need them to enter God's kingdom. He entered in through faith in the promised Savior.

The rich man just prior to our text, however, loved his possessions more than he loved God. Well, you cannot serve both God and money. The man was choking on his wealth. And so Jesus, attempting to rescue him, performed the Heimlich maneuver to expel his riches from him. But he would not let Him. Even though his riches were choking him to death, he loved them too much.

You and I live in a world where having wealth is everything. This is not what we believe as Christians. We believe that having Jesus is everything. But who of us is able to shut the world out, completely silencing every temptation? We are not of the world, yet we are in it. Our lives are shaped by the cross of our Lord in our baptism. Yet you know, as well as I, that it does not take much enticing for us to shape ourselves after the world.

We like stuff just as the people of this world do. We like having money and what money can buy. We like the security it offers. And maybe we don't just like, but we love and crave all these. But be warned. "*It is through (this love) this craving,*" writes St. Paul, "*that some have wandered away from the faith.*"

"Oh, that would never happen to me," we might be quick to say. Well then, test yourself. If you love God more than your money; if you trust Him and not your wealth, compare what you give to God with what you spend on yourself. Your offerings, your time, your talents. And if you and I discover that we give God little to nothing in comparison, is that not an indicator that we are loving and trusting our wealth more than we love and trust Jesus?

What's the answer? It's not in us. You and I do not have it with in ourselves to change. "*With man it is impossible,*" says Jesus. The answer lies with God. "*All things,*" He says, "*are possible with God.*"

And why is this? Because that promised Savior, whom Abraham loved and trusted, would be conceived within the Virgin Mary and born from her womb. "*How can this be?*" she asked the angel. "How can I conceive in my womb, for I am a virgin?" And Gabriel said to her, "*Nothing will be impossible with God.*"

Within the womb of the virgin is where the impossible became possible. God turned impossible on its head, and now we say with the apostle, *"I can do all things through Christ!"* What the Law could not do, Jesus did for you. He kept the Law in your place. An impossibility for us, but not for Him. Jesus gave up all that He had. An impossibility for us, but not for Him. We struggle to give up even a little of what we have. So out of pure grace, Jesus became nothing, giving it all up, so that you, baptized into His death and resurrection, can toss your camel away because the Kingdom of God now belongs to you.

Simon Peter replied to all this, *"See (Jesus), we have left everything and followed You."* Oh Peter, how foolish to say such a thing. It is not what we leave and give up. It is not what we do. It is only what Jesus does that truly matters. *"No one can come to Me,"* He says, *"unless the Father draws him."* With us there is no possibility of salvation. Every effort of ours, everything we do is hog-tied to that camel. It is Jesus alone who removes the camel from us. He leaves His majesty behind. He comes to us. He is thrown onto a cross to die. And He rises from the dead. It's all Jesus and it's only Jesus.

*"With man is it impossible, but not with God."* Your past and mine, so full of wrongdoing. Every day of our life, you and I have flat-out refused to love Jesus more than our riches, refused to cling to Him with both hands, keeping, instead, one hand on the security that our wealth gives us.

You and I are impossible to the core. But not Jesus. And so He gives both of His hands to His crucifiers. He gives them both of His feet. He gives everything that He has and is. For you, my friend, for you. Not to teach you how to do it. To forgive you. Yes, to forgive you. And this is what your God does. He forgives all of you. Even that sin in your past which you think is so awful that it is impossible for that sin to be forgiven. It is forgiven. Jesus died for that sin too. *"With God all things are possible."*

And if you believe this, and with God this is possible, then He will change you. He will work in you to free you of your doubts and your guilt. And your camel? You don't need it. You have Jesus. With Him you enter into God's kingdom. Amen.