

FOR GOD
NOTHING IS
IMPOSSIBLE

Matthew 19:25–26

25 When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, “Who then can be saved?”

26 Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

Reflection

(Today’s reflection is given by Justin Mof-fatt)

Just two verses today: Matthew 19:25 and 26. The context of these two verses being that the rich young 'ruler' has just been told that to 'get eternal life' he has to 'sell his possessions and to give them to the poor' and then follow Jesus. The young man walks away, since we are told, he had 'great wealth'. Jesus then said to his disciples in yesterday's passage:

23 'Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. 24 Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.'

Which leads directly into our passage to-

day:

25 When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, “Who then can be saved?”

26 Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

What do we learn from these two verses? Three things. Firstly, what Jesus said is astonishing! The reaction of the disciples is appropriate. That’s just worth saying. What Jesus said is astonishing on so many levels. It is astonishing that Jesus pressed this young man at all! He is willing. He is respectful. He is asking the right questions. He is moral. He is at least honest about his own heart. He’s not testing Jesus. He wants the truth. At least it looks

like he does.

But equally, it is astonishing that the young man walked away from 'eternal life' in the 'kingdom of God'. If the man had a glimpse into the future, and if he could see all that God had promised for the world he created and loves, if he could see that all this would come true, he may not have walked.

But money – cash in the bank – had gripped his heart. If he knew that God was going to renew this world with Christ as king, and if he truly knew that all things would be put to rights, and if he truly knew that God will be worshipped as he ought to be, then he would have surely followed. If he knew Christ was to be worshipped, not money, then he wouldn't have sold his soul for a bowl of soup.

It is also astonishing that a 'rich man' doesn't automatically make it into the kingdom. This came up in yesterday's talk. Money, it was thought back then, was an indication that God had blessed you. In today's society, it is an indication that you've been successful at blessing yourself. But they at least back then knew that all things – wealth included – was a gift from God. And Jesus was effectively saying: The blessed (wealthy) are in fact cursed (since this man could not receive the kingdom). Because he walked away.

Which takes us to our second lesson. Why do we think that 'salvation', which is the prerequisite for entering the kingdom, belongs to anyone? We tend to think that good people, with good morals, or Chris-

tian ethics, or people contributing to society should be acceptable to God. But the disciples picked it! If this really good man can't 'make it' into the kingdom of heaven, then – and I quote – who can!? Who, then, can be saved? It's a rhetorical question! It reveals that they have understood something of Jesus' intentions with this little encounter.

We tend to think of our acceptance into the kingdom as a sort of 'right'. We might even unconsciously feel it! Just not thinking about it, we may find that we have an entitlement approach to God. Poet W.H. Auden (putting words into King Herod's mouth) wrote:

“Every crook will argue: I like committing crimes. God likes forgiving them. Really

the world is admirably arranged”.

It's God's job to accept me! But that's not true. We are all like this man to some degree. Loving something or someone more than Jesus in a way that – when tested – would make me walk. This is why Paul wanted to stress, in his letter to the Ephesians, that 'it is by grace you have been saved'. And Paul asks them to keep it front and centre in their minds that they had no 'right' to be saved,

11 Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called 'uncircumcised' by those who call themselves 'the circumcision' (which is done in the body by human hands) – 12 remember that at that time you were separate from

Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. (Eph 2:11–13)

So don't take it lightly. 'Who then can be saved?' is the right question!

Jesus says very clearly: "With man this is impossible..." You may as well get a camel threaded through the eye of a needle, as get a rich man – or in fact, any man – into the kingdom.

So how do we get there? Thirdly, we learn that God does the impossible. He saves

me. He can receive a sinner like me into the kingdom. He can get someone like me, with all sorts of ‘other loves’, and forgive me. In other words, God can thread a camel through the eye of a needle. That phrase of Jesus could be used to sum up the gospel itself!

26 Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

The truth is that on your own: your forgiveness is impossible. Your salvation is impossible. Your justification is impossible. Your place in the kingdom is impossible. Your future unassured. Hell is the only certainty. Just judgement the only possibility.

All this is true. Unless... Unless what? Un-

less 'with God all things are possible.'

Think & Pray

Have you drunk this in? Maybe read Ephesians 2:1-10 if you are human, then Ephesians 2:11-22 if you are not a Jew. Meditate on those words.

Have a think about your 'thing' that you love; the thing that would stop you from following Jesus. Is it your wealth? Status? Identity? Ability to win, achieve and conquer?

Then thank God that 'with God all things are possible.' Thank God that Christ died for that sin of loving something more than him!

In Verse 26 Jesus looked at them and said,

“With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

Spend some time meditating and praying over these words, imagining that Jesus is looking at you! Let him in, and let him speak to you.