

LENT DEVOTIONAL

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SCRIPTURE

Mark 10:17-31

17 As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 18 Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. 19 You know the commandments: '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.'" 20 He said to him, "Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth." 21 Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." 22 When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

23 Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" 24 And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! 25 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." 26 They were greatly astounded and said to one another, "Then who can be saved?" 27 Jesus looked at them and said, "For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible."

28 Peter began to say to him, "Look, we have left everything and followed you." 29 Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, 30 who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age - houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields with persecutions - and in the age to come eternal life. 31 But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first."

DEVOTIONAL

What do you have to lose? This is an interesting response to the prospect of trying something new. For some, this question is an automatic reaction to the presentation of a different possibility. The rich man in today's passage had a very real chance of losing everything. In his mind, he could not follow Jesus, because it was too expensive.

Jesus, I would imagine, was quite sad about this exchange. The rich man asked the wrong question, as people tend to do. The question was not "What do I have to lose?" but "What do I have to gain?" We are sometimes afraid to try new things or experiences because of the potential cost. A former professor of mine said, "People prefer the misery they know to the mystery they don't."

We can get stuck at times—stuck in the things that we own and stuck in the things that own us. We get stuck because we are afraid of change, because our identities are intricately tied to and interwoven with the various things we have. If the rich man would have given away all the things he owned, he would no longer be “the rich man,” causing an existential identity crisis. But unbeknownst to him, there was a new and better identity waiting for him in the arms of Jesus: an identity of love, an identity a community, an identity of care and concern, an identity of baptism, an identity of adoption. An identity that transforms us, molds us, and completes us.

Sometimes we get stuck not knowing who we truly are, unaware of the truth that Jesus offers us: not just a *new* identity, but a *better* identity. In our search for identity, we pick up a few needless things along the way, but the waters of baptism can wash them off as we put on the garments of humility and grace. When we do this, we learn who we are and whose we are, and that identity is better than anything the world can offer.

PRAYER

Wonderous Lord, we often don't know who we are. We think we do, but then we get lost in the things that weigh us down. Free us from our misery and lead us into your mystery. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

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