



Date: 6th & 13th October 2024

Theme: True Riches

Bible Reading: Mark 10:17-31

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PREPARATION FOR GROUP LEADERS

Please ensure that your group members are aware of the date, time and venue, especially any new members. Please make yourself familiar with all the material and Bible passages beforehand.

PREPARATION FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS

Please read **Mark chapter 10: verses 17-31**. This is the Gospel reading set for Sunday 13th October, which is the story of Jesus' dialogue with 'The Rich Young Man' and the discussion which followed with his disciples. If you have time, it might be helpful to look briefly at the virtually identical stories in two of the other Gospels: **Matthew 19:16-30** and **Luke 18:18-30**. There are some small but interesting differences in the detail.

Imagine that you were one of the disciples of Jesus listening to the conversation between Jesus and the rich young man. Might there have been anything in the dialogue that surprised you and would the explanations given by Jesus afterwards have been helpful (or confuse you even more)?

STARTING THE SESSION: A PRAYER

Lord Jesus,
thank you for revealing your Father to us
and showing us that He, with the Holy Spirit and Yourself, are truly a God of love,
desiring a closer relationship with us all.
We pray for our time together today
and ask that, through the Holy Spirit, we may listen to what You are saying to us
as we read and reflect on the Scriptures and also the discussion of our group.
We pray for this 'Good Soil' group – for growth in our understanding, fellowship and faith –
and for other devotional groups meeting in the life of our church and circuit.
In Your name we offer this prayer. Amen.

FINDING OUR ROOTS

In small groups of about 3 or 4 people, reflect on what John Wesley (the founder of Methodism) said over 250 years ago in his sermon "*On the use of money*". Wesley gave three simple rules about how we should use money: "**Earn all you can; save all you can; give all you can**".

Naturally, Wesley explained and qualified this statement within his sermon, including that earning (or 'gaining') should never be done in such a way as to harm anyone; and saving means living without any needless expense, waste or luxury. Times and circumstances have moved on since Wesley's day but *how relevant are these rules to the Christian today? Or can you see any problems with his advice?* Perhaps you could even suggest amendments to these rules more suitable for today's world.

(Spend no more than 15 minutes in this discussion.)

READING THE SCRIPTURES

Read together the Bible passage: **Mark 10:17-31**

Background Information: Mark 10 records the continuation of that decisive journey of Jesus and his closest disciples to Jerusalem, starting in Caesarea Philippi (end of Mark 8). From then, you may notice that there is a greater sense of urgency in Jesus' preaching, an increase of confrontations with the Pharisees and other teachers, and the teaching given to his disciples becomes more intensive, particularly about his impending death and resurrection, which the disciples struggle to comprehend.

By chapter 10, we find Jesus and his disciples east of the Jordan river travelling south and reaching the region of Perea. Along his travels, he would undoubtedly have been met by crowds as well as some opposition from teachers of the Jewish law. After some people brought their children to Jesus to be blessed, a young man ran up to him, pleading with him to tell him what he needed to do to inherit eternal life. The next stage of his journey would be to cross the Jordan river to get to Jericho before starting the final part of this journey to Jerusalem (not far in distance but a steep, difficult and dangerous road).

Jesus' conversation with the **Rich Young Man** is often associated with the potential evils of wealth. But it is much more than that. Notice the difference between the question asked by the man and the answer given by Jesus. Perhaps he was trying to help him consider a bigger question: *Who is Jesus?*

Jesus was asking the man to consider the consequences of becoming a disciple before making the decision to follow him. (**Luke 14:25-35** may be helpful, as Jesus again explains the cost...)

Jesus reminded the disciples that eternal life could not be earned but is a free gift from God (v.27).

DIGGING DEEPER

It is interesting that Jesus mentioned the last six of the Ten Commandments, which the man claimed he kept. Perhaps the first two would have been more challenging (see **Exodus 20**). Was Jesus implying that he may be breaking the second commandment, with wealth as his idol? *What idols today may be our barrier in putting God first in our lives and following Jesus?*

Jesus humorously describes the impossible scenario of a camel going through the eye of a needle – as an image of trying to get into God's kingdom while clinging on to earthly riches. "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God" (v.23). *How relevant is this teaching today? In what ways might money and wealth get in the way of following Jesus?*

Where do we see riches or materialism dominating our choices and politics, or and even threatening the future of our planet? How hard or easy is it to find a change of priority; a change of direction?

We are told that Jesus 'loved' the young man. Jesus did not reject him. And yet he left sadly, perhaps feeling rejected. *How would you describe the feeling of rejection? Can we see it as an opportunity for further reflection or growth? What might your response have been to Jesus in this instance?*

What challenges and possible consequences may some people today be faced with before deciding whether to follow Jesus? (Have you made the decision yourself?)

What do you think it means to have 'treasure in heaven?' Where do you find true riches?

PRAYING TOGETHER

Together as a group, bring to God your prayers (spoken or in silence) for the work of this church, including its small groups, and also anything else on your hearts.

Pray for those who are living with poverty or financial difficulties. And for those whose love of money has overtaken their lives and become their idol or 'god'.

Pray for those who are persecuted today for making the choice to follow Jesus.

Pray for those who seem to be 'last' in the world today; for justice and a future in God's kingdom.

Conclude by saying **the Lord's Prayer** together.