



THE WORD FOR TODAY

Luke's Gospel, Chapter 18, vv18-30

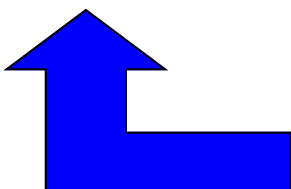
The rich ruler and the Kingdom of God

Jesus has been talking about the Kingdom of God and this encounter gives him an opportunity to say more both about how to enter the Kingdom and about the benefits of it. Its an important encounter—mentioned in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark as well. We can pick up other details by looking at those versions: that this man was young; that he felt some urgency because he ran up to Jesus; that he knelt at Jesus' feet, that Jesus looked at him with love and wanted him to understand.

Why did this man come to Jesus in the first place? He would appear to have everything he could want in life, but then things are not always as they appear.



Follow the words of this passage round the church, beginning on the north wall of this little building. There is stonework going on so please take care: keep away from scaffolding or other hazards, and if you walk on the grass be careful not to slip if it is at all damp. We are using the New International Version of the Bible, which you can find on the internet under Bible Gateway, and the whole “Word for Today” is on the church website, which is www.libertonkirk.net You can also find meditations and prayers on other Bible passages there in previous “Words for Today”.

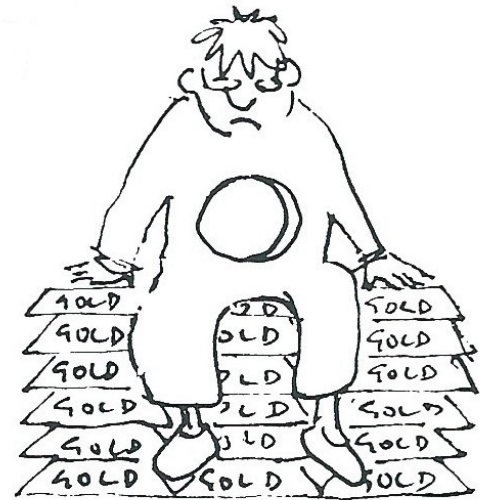


Turn immediately left to find the first verses of the Bible passage on the bench

“A certain ruler asked Jesus, ‘Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?’ ‘Why do you call me good?’ Jesus answered. ‘No-one is good—except God alone.’”

1

Here we have the explanation of why this young man came to Jesus despite his appearing to have everything—money and status certainly. He had deep uncertainties about his future. He had an emptiness inside him which none of his riches could fill—the hole that the Alpha Course describes and Charlie Mackesy pictures so well. This man wanted to know how he could put this right. He was used to being able to get things done for himself.



When we feel that there is something missing in our lives—perhaps some meaning, some hope—we can take a tip from this young man and ask Jesus to help us. Jesus is the only one who can put us on the right track.

***Lord, help me to recognise my need of you.
Draw me closer to you.
Help me to accept you as my Saviour and my Friend.***

(Station 2 is on the East side of the church building just past the scaffolding on the right, but if you don't want to walk past the scaffolding on the grass, walk round the church in the other direction until you eventually find Station 2.)



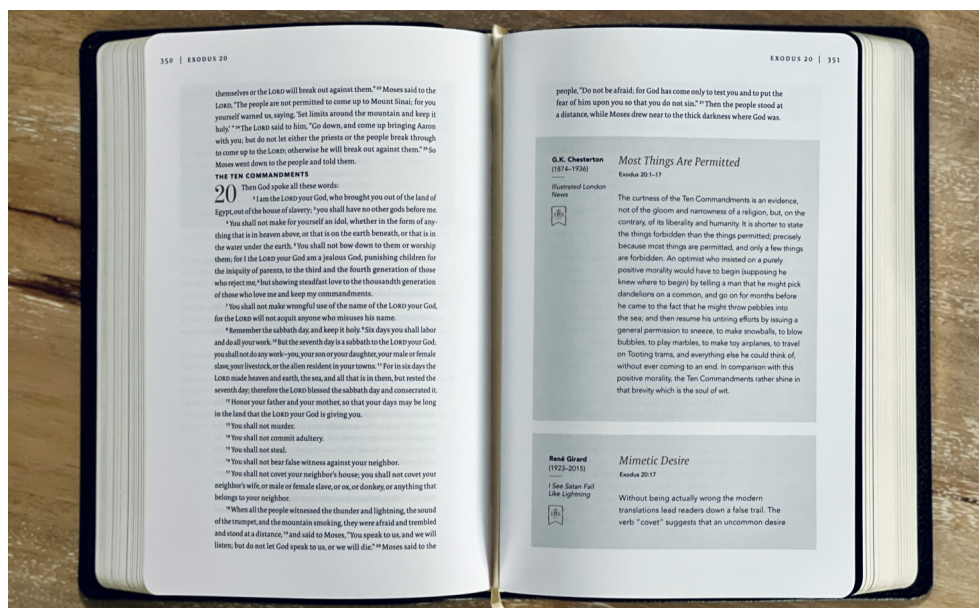
THE WORD FOR TODAY

**“You know the commandments:
Do not commit adultery, do not murder,
do not steal, do not give false testimony,
honour your father and mother.’
‘All these I have kept since I was a boy.’”**

2

This man had obviously followed his Jewish religion faithfully all his life. It was a part of who he was as an important member of society. He knew the ten commandments well and knew they must be kept. They were, and still are, a valuable framework for living, but a framework needs other things added to it to make it complete. Jesus was to give his life for us, and this sacrifice and all his teaching was showing us what is needed.

We can think we are being good Christians if we keep the commandments and go to church on Sundays. In reality we need something more.

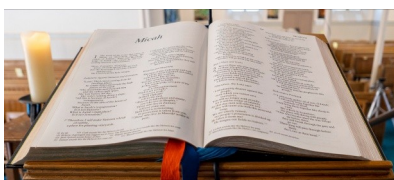


Lord, let me be a whole-hearted Christian.

Help me to learn more every day through your word and through prayer.

Give me an open mind and a listening ear.

(No. 3 is further along this side of the church building)



THE WORD FOR TODAY

***“ ‘You still lack one thing.
Sell everything you have and give to the poor,
and you will have treasure in heaven.
Then come, follow me.’***

***When he heard this, he became very sad,
because he was a man of great wealth.”***

3



Jesus put his finger on the problem which was keeping this young man from the peace and security of knowing he had a future to look forward to—his money and status were just too important to him. His devotion to them was keeping him from really finding out what God had in mind for him. He liked to be in control of his life, but this kept him from getting to know his Saviour and Lord. That needed humility. The thought of giving away his wealth to the poor was too big a step for him to take, even to be sure of the eternal life he was so desperate for.

What we have to ask ourselves is whether there is anything in our lives which is keeping us from getting to know Jesus—something which is our central focus. It may not be money. It could be something as simple as a hobby, or family involvement, which dominates our thinking and our time and leaves little for our Lord. Do we perhaps need to re-assess?

***Lord, help me to look at my priorities.
Give me the humility to acknowledge that
I need you at the centre of my life.***

(Walk along the back of the church and turn right to find No. 4 on the prayer bench)



THE WORD FOR TODAY

4

“Jesus looked at him and said, ‘How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.’”



It was hard for the rich to get into the kingdom because usually their riches meant a lot to them and kept them from putting God at the centre of things. Large quantities of money can have that effect, although it doesn't always have to be the case—some use their money and their influence in ways which change lives for the good.

It is easier when you are poor to be humble, to want to serve others, to place your trust in God rather than in yourself. All these are needed to be a true follower of Christ and to find his Kingdom.

***Lord, whatever I have comes from you.
Teach me to use it wisely
and to seek your guidance in all I do.***

(No. 5 is on the West side of the church before you come to the tower)



THE WORD FOR TODAY

“Those who heard this asked, ‘Who then can be saved?’ Jesus replied, ‘What is impossible with men is possible with God.’”

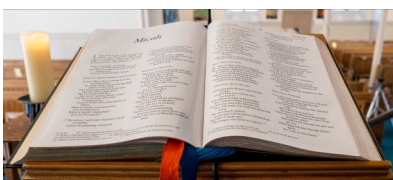
5



We have to think of a different dimension when we think about God. He is the all-powerful creator of the universe, who nevertheless knows and loves us all individually. He alone can solve problems which are beyond our capacity as human beings to solve. Isn't it amazing that we can take these problems to him in prayer, knowing that a solution is not beyond him? When the world is as scary as it is at the moment, and the human suffering is so distressing, the one thing we can all do is pray, and know that God is listening.

***Loving God, we praise you for your glory and almighty power.
Thank you for always being there for us.
Thank you for listening to the prayers of your people.***

(Walk towards the front of the church and find No. 6 near the cairn)



THE WORD FOR TODAY

*“Peter said to him,
‘We have left all we had to follow you!’”*

6



In Matthew’s account of this story Peter goes on to ask “What then will there be for us?” Some of Jesus’ disciples had indeed left their daily work and their families behind as they followed Jesus round the country in his years of ministry. That didn’t mean that the fishermen, for example, didn’t still have their boats—they could still feed their families and take people across the lake. But fishing didn’t dominate their lives. Jesus came first. No doubt they thought about their futures every now and again, possibly prompted by bewildered family members.

Jesus had called these twelve men, and they had followed him. We have to ask what he is calling us to do.

*Lord, we know you do not ask anything of us beyond our capabilities.
Open our ears to your voice calling us to your service.
Let us not hold back.*

(Walk to the front of the church and find No. 7 on one of the benches)



THE WORD FOR TODAY

***“I tell you the truth,’ Jesus said to them,
‘no-one who has left home or wife or brothers
or parents or children for the sake of the
kingdom of God will fail to receive many times
as much in this age
and, in the age to come, eternal life.’”***

7

When Jesus says “I tell you the truth” we have every reason to believe what he says. The rewards for giving up things in our lives for the sake of Jesus and God’s Kingdom are great, both in this life and in the next. Graham Kendrick’s song (based on words in Philippians 3) says it all for us:

***“All I once held dear, built my life upon,
All this world reveres and wars to own;
All I once thought gain I have counted loss—
Spent and worthless now, compared to this.
Knowing you, Jesus, knowing you, there is no greater thing;
You’re my all, you’re the best, you’re my joy , my righteousness;
and I love you, Lord.”***



***Loving Lord, we know we can trust your word to us.
We rejoice in the joy of knowing you in our lives today
and we cherish your promise of a bright future to come.***

If anything you have read has prompted questions you would like to discuss, please contact John Young on 664 3067 or jyoung@churchofscotland.org.uk



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