

## 101324 English Sermon "Grace and Stewardship" Mark 10:17-27

We often strive for success, achievement, recognition, and security in life, believing that what we possess reflects our worth and standing. The world places great value on wealth and accomplishments, much like it did in Jesus' time. In today's passage, we see a young man who, despite his wealth and moral life, struggles with one thing: surrendering it all to follow Jesus. And Jesus responds with a statement that shifts our focus from human effort to God's power and grace: "What is impossible with people is possible with God."

This statement is not only about salvation but also about stewardship—how we handle the resources, time, and opportunities God has entrusted to us. True stewardship requires a heart that is fully surrendered to God, trusting in His power rather than our own abilities or possessions.

When Jesus said, "What is impossible with people is possible with God," He was pointing to the fact that human effort alone cannot bring about salvation or holiness. It is only through God's grace that we can live as faithful stewards of all God has entrusted to us.

The rich young man approached Jesus with a question that revealed his mindset: "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" It may seem admirable that a young person is interested in eternal life, but he thought eternal life was a matter of earning and deserving, not of relationship. He said he had followed the commandments from his youth. Really? This was possible according to the way these commandments were commonly interpreted but impossible according to the true meaning of God for these commandments.

However, Jesus' answer got to the heart of the matter. When Jesus told the young man to sell all he had and give to the poor, he was not just giving a command; he was revealing the young man's need for grace. The young man seemed to have done everything according to the law, but his heart was still attached to his wealth. His moral effort, though admirable, could not save him because salvation is not earned by works—it is a gift of grace. Even today, if Jesus told you to sell everything you have and follow Him, who would be saved? No one.

In the Wesleyan tradition, we believe in prevenient grace, the grace that goes before us, drawing us to God even before we are aware of it. This rich young man was being invited into a life of justifying grace, where he would experience the forgiveness and transformation that only Christ can give. But he turned away, unable to let go of what he thought gave him value. His story reminds us that no amount of human effort can substitute for God's grace. As Methodists, we understand that grace is the foundation of our salvation and our spiritual growth.

After the young man left, Jesus turned to His disciples and said, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!" His statement shocked them because they, like many of the Jews at the time, believed wealth was a sign of God's blessing. If a wealthy, morally upright man could not easily enter the kingdom, then who could? No one!

But don't feel guilty about not being able to sell everything you have. I am sure that is not what Jesus is really trying to say to you today. This is where Jesus introduces the idea that stewardship is not about human achievement but about grace. Stewardship, in the Wesleyan sense, is how we respond to God's grace in our lives. It is the recognition that everything you have—your time, your talents, your resources—comes from God, and you are called to

manage them for God's glory. Stewardship is not a way to earn God's favor but a response to the favor and grace that we have already received.

John Wesley famously said, "Earn all you can, save all you can, give all you can." This reflects a balanced understanding of stewardship. We are to work diligently, using the gifts and opportunities God has given us. We are to live responsibly, managing our resources with discernment. And most importantly, we are to be generous and give to others in response to the grace God has so generously bestowed upon us.

When Jesus said, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God," He wasn't condemning wealth itself but was pointing to the difficulty of entering God's kingdom when we are attached to our possessions. True stewardship begins with the recognition that everything belongs to God. It is only by God's grace that we have anything at all, and our call is to use what we have for God's purposes.

Jesus' response to the disciples' question, "Who then can be saved?" is profound: "What is impossible with people is possible with God." This statement tells us about the heart of the Gospel: human effort alone is not enough to save us or to enable us to live as faithful stewards of God's gifts. We need grace.

In the Wesleyan tradition, we talk about sanctifying grace, the grace that enables us to grow in holiness and Christlikeness. Stewardship, too, is a work of sanctifying grace. It is by God's grace that we are able to let go of our attachments to material things and fully trust in God to provide. It is by grace that we are empowered to give generously, to live sacrificially, and to serve others in love. God's grace sometimes moves us beyond our comfort zone to reach out to others, even in church. Do you only approach and talk

to people you know in church? Or do you approach people you don't know well and greet them first with a smile and welcome them?

John Wesley understood that stewardship was not just about money, but about the whole of life. He urged early Methodists to live simply and give generously, not out of obligation but as a response to the transforming grace of God. He believed that grace not only saves us but also empowers us to live out our faith in practical ways, including how we manage our resources.

Stewardship is an act of faith. It is trusting that what seems impossible to us is possible through God's grace: living generously, managing our resources wisely, and serving God faithfully. When we surrender our lives to Christ, we experience the freedom that comes from knowing that God will take care of our every need.

As Methodists, we believe that grace is the foundation of everything we do. Stewardship is not a legalistic requirement but a joyful response to the abundant grace we have received. In a world that often measures success by wealth and possessions, we are called to a different standard: the standard of grace-filled stewardship.

Dear beloved sisters and brothers in Christ, "What is impossible with people is possible with God." This truth reminds us that it is only by God's grace that we can be saved, and it is only by His grace that we can live as faithful stewards. Let us commit ourselves today to live lives of grace-filled stewardship, trusting that God will enable us to use everything God has entrusted to us for God's glory and for the good of others. Fairfield Grace, may God's grace, peace, goodness, and mercy be with you, your family, your business, your studies, and with the lives of your children. To Christ be thanks and praise. Amen.