

GENEROSITY

Responding To God's Radical Grace In Community

LESSON 5 – GENEROSITY AND WEALTH

PART 1

*"A certain ruler asked him, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"¹⁹ "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone."²⁰ You know the commandments: 'You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, honor your father and mother.'"²¹ "All these I have kept since I was a boy," he said. ²² When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "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."²³ When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was very wealthy. ²⁴ Jesus looked at him and said, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ Indeed, 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.'" **Luke 18:18-25 (NIV)***

In the ancient world, wealth was viewed as a sign of God's favor. The belief was that the richer you were, the more God had blessed you. As a result, wealth was often equated with holiness. But Jesus turns that way of thinking completely around.

The Rich Ruler

1. The rich ruler thought he had done everything he was **required** to do because he kept the Ten Commandments.
While God gave the commandments to address the hearts of motivation of his people, the rich ruler had turned them into an exercise of moralistic one-upmanship.
2. The rich ruler's true trust was in his **wealth**, thereby breaking the first commandment to "have no other gods before me."
Essentially, he was saying that he would rather serve created things (his wealth) than the Creator. But created things were only meant to be gifts from God, not gods themselves. We either love and serve God, or we love and serve something else.
3. In Jesus' encounter with the rich ruler, he says that the **richer** you are, the harder it is to enter the kingdom of God.

*"Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven." **Matthew 19:23 (NIV)***

Dangers of Wealth

1. Jesus is **warning** about the spiritual danger of wealth that blinds people to their need for salvation.

2. Jesus is saying that it takes God's supernatural **intervention** to bring people – especially successful and financially secure people into the kingdom.
3. While there is nothing inherently evil about **wealth**, it exerts enormous power over us in treacherous ways.
4. Jesus spoke about money and the **dangers** of wealth on many occasions, warning about the "deceitfulness of wealth."

*"The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful." **Matthew 13:22 (NIV)***

5. Wealth **deceives** by luring us into a false sense of security, by creating an unending desire for more, and by replacing our primary need for repentance with proud independence.

How important is Jesus to you than everything else?

*Those who heard this asked, "Who then can be saved?" ²⁷ Jesus replied, "What is impossible with man is possible with God." ²⁸ Peter said to him, "We have left all we had to follow you!" ²⁹ "Truly I tell you," Jesus said to them, "no one who has left home or wife or brothers or sisters or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God ³⁰ will fail to receive many times as much in this age, and in the age to come eternal life." **Luke 18:26-30 (NIV)***

1. Jesus is not only addressing wealth, but also **identifying** anything that could become one's functional salvation (a means of redemption that replaces God's salvation through Jesus).
2. The call to follow Jesus does not merely require **trusting** him for salvation. Trusting Jesus also demands that we stop trusting all other things for our security and self-worth.
3. Following Jesus means much more than external obedience and requires that we trust in him **more than** in other things.
4. The things that **naturally** keep us from God are noticeable by wealth, which is why Jesus repeatedly addressed the dangers of wealth.

*"Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions." **Luke 12:15 (NIV)***

5. Jesus said those who give up everything to follow him, He assures them that they have not misplaced their **faith**.
6. They may lose family, but they get a **new family** in the Christian community.
7. They may lose material security, but they gain a security that is rooted in God's **love** and **faithfulness**.

Following Jesus, therefore requires radical faith in his promises.