

Lectionary Gospel Commentaries

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Based on the Lectionary Pericope Covering:

SOLA-LSB (Lutheran Service Book):
RCL (Revised Common Lectionary):

Mark 10:23-31

Year B - Proper 24, Text: Mark 10:23-31
Part of Year B - Proper 23, Text: Mark 10:17-31

Editor's Note: The RCL pericope for Proper 23 (Mark 10:17-31) is divided into two separate pericopes in the LSB lectionary: Proper 23 (Mark 10:17-22) and Proper 24 (Mark 10:23-31).

These verses follow directly after Jesus encounter with the Rich Young Ruler, in Mark 10:17-22.

Verses 10:23-24: After the man leaves, Jesus focuses on His teaching in relation to poverty. The disciples are perplexed by Jesus' statement that trusting in one's riches makes entry into God's Kingdom impossible.

Pious Jews looked on honestly acquired possessions as a sign of divine favor. Although there were sects who embraced the concept of poverty (e.g., the Essenes), they were not in the mainstream of Jewish national life. Those who lived in poverty were regarded as those enduring a divine affliction. Jesus shocks His hearers by referring to wealth as a barrier to submitting to the reign of God.

The issue here is not wealth *per se* but rather an idolatrous attitude toward wealth, and the false assumption that such wealth was a divine reward for obeying God's law.

Verse 10:25: Jesus reinforces His teaching on the danger of riches with a colorful metaphor, so exaggerated that its meaning is immediately apparent (cf. Luke 6:41 on the beam and the speck; Matthew 23:24 on the gnat and the camel). Interpretive explanations and theories that try to suggest such a thing was not *impossible* miss the point. The disciples' response in the next verse confirms this.

Verses 10:26-27: What will the population of God's Kingdom be if those who are thought to be especially favored are now excluded?

We might expect Jesus to respond by describing a mitigating attitude in the minds of pious rich that might somehow exonerate them. But Jesus does not do this. He deals with an example of the insoluble.

(Here, we as well as the Palestinian Jews, are meant to be amazed!) The rich man simply cannot enter the kingdom of God in any way known to man. Only the gracious and all-powerful God can solve this paradox and do the impossible.

Verse 10:28: Peter asks what he and the disciples might expect now that they have "paid the price" for discipleship, for leaving everything they had and following Jesus.

Verses 10:29–30: Jesus stresses that those who have left everyone and everything to follow Him will find themselves belonging to a precious family, a divine community, in this life — and they will experience eternal life in the age to come.

Texts like this are sometimes misused in the church as a guilt-based tool for fund-raising. The following are some general thoughts in relation to managing life and God's creation:

- Maker and Owner of heaven and earth. We humans own nothing — neither the land on which we stand, nor the property we claim, not even our very selves. God has provided abundantly but humanity, but we can't take it with us. "One never sees a U-Haul attached to a hearse!"
- In relation to the stewardship of money, the goal must not be to encourage people to give more. It must be to inspire people to manage better what God has entrusted to them. We must get people to think beyond "tithing" as something we do for God. The issue is not persuading people to give ten percent and then keep the rest for themselves! No one owns anything because God owns everything.
- According to Jesus, being blessed has nothing to do with possessions or status; it has to do with devoting one's life to serving Jesus in all His "distressing disguises" (Mother Theresa's term). Ponder Matthew 25:31–46 (The Sheep and the Goats).

