Title: *Through the Eye of a Needle* Homecrest PC

Scripture: *Mark 10:17-31 10/14/18*

How many of you like to play the game of Monopoly? It is one of the world’s most popular games of all time. Since 1902, over 300 million copies have been sold worldwide in multiple languages, various versions and formats (including the digital App version which I play sometimes). The main objective of the game is to strategize with your investment and assets try to take as much money away from your opponents as possible, by buying up real estate and then building houses/hotels on your property and charging people a landing fee if one is unlucky enough to land on your properties. It’s a game of “Chance” but it does take a great deal of strategy and a little bit of luck as well, in order to be the last person standing and to make everyone declares bankrupt. You try to take all of your opponents’ money and make them declare bankruptcy.

In a consumeristic and capitalistic society that we live today, somehow we ride on the notion that everything can be resolved with money and materialistic things. And that what we own and how much we own often measures our success. It offers us a sense of power and control over others. ***“The more we own, the better we are!”….***just like in the game of monopoly.

One of my sister’s friends is a professional bargain hunter…or a horder if you will. She knows where all the good deals are. Every week she checks out all the circulars looking for the best deal in town and then stock up on things that she doesn’t really need. Her home was like a mini-Costco. You can almost find anything under the sun in there. She was a horder. The more things that she owns, the better she feels about herself and her own sense of worth. Chances are we all know some people like that, or perhaps we might be one of them as well.

**Our “self-worthiness” is often measured based upon what or how much one owns rather than what we believe and value in life.**  **We find ourselves constantly looking to meet certain expectations or standards that are set by others, by our peers or our competitors, rather than by God.**

In the passage that we read earlier, we’ve come across a young follower of Jesus looking to also meet his expectations and validation. He’s got a lot of questions and was in needs of some answers. This young man seemingly had everything that one could dream of but STILL he was not happy with his life and his own achievement. There was still something missing. There was some kind of yearning and craving deep within. He felt insecure about himself and was definitely not at peace with himself or with God.

This young man asked Jesus what he must to do to inherit eternal life. That sounded like a million-dollar question! This rich young man probably had followed all of the laws and had met all of the expectations. He was optimistically excited about his future, however, he still felt insecure about his own future. He wanted to make sure that he punches the ticket into heaven. But as you and I know heaven is not something that we can earn our way into. We are admitted only through God’s grace and by our professed faith in Jesus Christ.

Our passage tells us that Jesus looked at this rich young man in the eye and said to him in a compassion and loving way, saying **“*there is one more thing that you need to do. Go and sell everything you have and give them to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. THEN, you can come and follow me.”*[[1]](#footnote-1)**

This certainly was not the response that the rich young man was looking for. This young man’s spirit was crushed. Verse 22 tells us that he walked away “grieving”. In other translations he was described as being “sorrowful” or “sad”. This young man came to realize that he could not fulfill what Jesus asked of him because his love for what he has accomplished or own on this earth was too great.

To give up all that he owns would mean that he has to start everything over from scratch. He would have to declare “bankruptcy” just like in the game of Monopoly. **All that he ever owned, all that he ever dreamt of and pursued and all of his passion had become his false sense of worship and idols.**

Jesus’ message for this rich young man (and to us today) was a clear and simple one. There is nothing wrong with wealth itself. The problem isn’t wealth per se but our attitude toward it.[[2]](#footnote-2) This may seem like an extremely hard request for many of us to honor. It’s about our commitment and allegiance towards God. As Jesus said, “where our treasure is, there will our heart be also.”[[3]](#footnote-3) It seems rather counter-cultural to our world today that we often measures one’s successes based by the volumes and accumulations of wealth and assets…how big is your house, how many college degrees have you earned, what prestigious schools you graduated from, what kind of car do you drive, or what Fortune 500 companies are you working for…the list goes on and on? So What!?!

It seems that for many our goal in life is to make as much money as possible, in order to make ourselves feel more secured and live more comfortably. Even honestly acquired and generously shared wealth can lead to pride. This is why Jesus said that it would be easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God. Unfortunately this often comes at the expense of others through our exploitation of power, especially among the vulnerable groups of population, as we talked about last week, such as the women and children, foreigners or other ethnic minorities.

Incidentally this past weekend, as you know we celebrated Columbus Day. In some cities, Columbus Day was officially renamed it as “Indigenous” Day to honor of those who were already inhabiting on this land when the European settlers came ashore and supposedly “discovered” the land that were already occupied by others. Many of these settlers exploited the land, extracted many natural resources, killed and driven out the many indigenous people, and claim the land as their new home. The very land where we reside here today was inhabited by tribe of “Carnarsie” and “Lenape” and they spoke the languages of “Montauk” and “Deleware”. There is a web site where you can look all of this up anywhere in North America.

Getting back to our story for today, despite this rich young man’s great disappointment upon Jesus’s challenge to him, Jesus still “LOVED” him, as verse 21 tells us. Jesus LOVED him because he was willing to confront face-to-face with his personal weakness and vulnerability. He now knew what he still lacks even though he already has plenty. Perhaps he was willing to listen for advice. He had a teachable heart instead of a stubborn one! Give him credits though for his humility in reaching out to Jesus. Jesus loved this young man for his self-motivation and acknowledgement of his shortcoming. **Jesus invited him to take a bold leap of faith into the freedom by letting Go and letting God so that he may regain ultimate control of his life.**

What about us? How many of us would have felt the same way when Jesus raised the stake and demanded us to surrender ALL that we have? God’s ultimate challenge for us is to be radically transformed, when we say we believe and desire to commit our lives to follow him. **This transformation process is a life-long commitment rather than a momentary instant response.** Even stubborn hearts can be radically transformed. It is never too late. As Jesus said, ***“For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible.”[[4]](#footnote-4)***

Jesus challenged us to offer our “First Fruit”…meaning the Best of the Best, and to present ourselves wholeheartedly as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God as our spiritual worship.[[5]](#footnote-5) That’s what Jesus expects of us, nothing more and nothing less! ‘

**We may have all of the earthly “riches”, but it does us no good if we are spiritually bankrupt and living in this false-sense of reality and security in our relationship with God. Are we living a life like that rich young man feeling spiritually emptied right now?** That is what Jesus meant when he told the rich young man and to us today that ***“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.”****[[6]](#footnote-6)* **Through the eye of a needle, we may see God’s ultimate plan of salvation for ALL of humanity, not just for a few but for many!**

**Stewardship is more than just about our time, talent, and money, it’s about our personal responsibilities, our faith, our commitment and the choices that we make consciously every day.** As part of our discipleship through our journey of faith, **God has given us ALL more than we ever need. We are simply responding back by sharing what God rightfully deserves and expects of us.**

**When we are less dependent on earthly things, we are FREE from the bondage that holds us in captivity. We are no longer “slaves” but “servants” for Christ. We are liberated from the desire of wanting more than we need. It is only then when we can become spiritually rich once again and enter into the Kingdom of God through the eye of a needle!**

In a few weeks, we will be entering into the season of Thanksgiving, may we never forget how grateful we are to be invited to God’s heavenly feast as God’s chosen children, heirs according to God’s promise. This is all part of our inheritance due to our faith in Jesus Christ. God has entrusted us with many resources to be good stewards of and to do the right things…by sharing what we have (including our time) with others.

 Through our baptism, God has already written our names as beneficiaries of our Father’s riches and inheritance in heaven. Christ has invited us into a lifelong of discipline and obedience. **Although the eye of a needle may be narrowed, Christ has already paved the way by penetrating the darkness of evil in order for us to follow.**

May our hearts focus on the riches in heaven above and not the ones here below. ***"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”[[7]](#footnote-7)*** In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. *Mark 10:21* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Thompson James J. *Feasting on the Word, Year B, Volume 4,* P.166 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Matthew 6:21* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Mark 10:27* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *Romans 12:1* [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. *Mark 10:25* [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. *Matthew 5:3* [↑](#footnote-ref-7)