

LENT 2021 - Who Do You Say That I Am? "A Different Kind of Treasure"

March 14, 2021

Overarching theme: John 20:21, Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' In 2021, as DISCIPLES, we are SENT with the peace of Christ to share with others!

Instructions: When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.

Core Passage: Mark 10:17-31 NRSV ¹⁷ *As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"* ¹⁸ *Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone."* ¹⁹ *You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honor your father and mother.'"* ²⁰ *He said to him, "Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth."* ²¹ *Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me."* ²² *When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.* ²³ *Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!"* ²⁴ *And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ 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."* ²⁶ *They were greatly astounded and said to one another, "Then who can be saved?"* ²⁷ *Jesus looked at them and said, "For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible."* ²⁸ *Peter began to say to him, "Look, we have left everything and followed you."* ²⁹ *Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, ³⁰ who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions—*

and in the age to come eternal life. ³¹ But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first."

Commentary:

The story of the rich man who turns down the invitation to discipleship illustrates the fact that desire for wealth can stifle the seed sown by the Word (Mark 4:19). The rich man addresses Jesus as "Good Teacher" when asking what is required to inherit eternal life (v. 17). Jesus immediately switches the focus from himself to God: "No one is good but God alone" (v. 18). Reference to God as the only one who is good recalls the opening of the 10 Commandments or Decalogue (Deut 5:6). The Decalogue, which has figured in two earlier controversy stories in Mark, serves as a summary of the Law. The rich man states that he has followed all of the commandments from the time he was a young man (v. 20). Jesus' response, "looking at him, loved him" (v. 21), gives the reader no reason to doubt the truth of the man's claim, though it appears that the man has been less attentive to some commandments, particularly the first ("You shall have no other gods before me." Ex 20:3).

Jesus then extends to the man the call to join his circle of disciples. To do so, he must first divest himself of his idolatry (possessions that possessed him). The disciple-missionary cannot put possessions before God. It would be hard for a disciple to be a rich person with all the accompanying complex socioeconomic ties and relationships. This invitation also illustrates the earlier saying about becoming like a child insofar as it requires setting aside all the elements that confer status and power over others. Despite the rich man's apparent devotion to the Word of God, he cannot bring himself to accept the call. While saddened, he cannot let go of the socioeconomic prestige of being a "rich man" in order to be a disciple.

- adapted from the New Interpreter's Bible, Vol VIII p. 648-49

Questions to Ponder for accountability in the group:

1. The first of the 10 commandments reads "*you shall have no other gods before me.*" What are some examples of 'gods' that people might put before the Lord today? What 'god' or 'gods' are you tempted to put before the Lord?
2. Why do you think Jesus affirmed Zacchaeus' decision to give away half of his possessions (Luke 19:8-9), yet called this man to give away all?

3. Jesus comments, "How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" Why do you think this is so hard?
4. Jesus offers a hundredfold promise of blessing (along with persecutions) in response to Peter's declaration "we have left everything and followed you" (v. 28-30). If Jesus is not speaking literally about this hundredfold blessing, what do you think he is referring to?
5. In a world that is all about treasure of a financial kind, what helps you remain grounded in a different (relational) kind of treasure?

Activity for the life of a disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional and spend time pondering and meditating on the challenge.
2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week: Mark 10:26-27
²⁶ They were greatly astounded and said to one another, "Then who can be saved?" ²⁷ Jesus looked at them and said, "For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible."
3. Invest in God's eternal treasure this week by starting each day with God and by reaching out and encouraging someone who you haven't spoken with recently.