

**Chartwell Cooperating Church, Hamilton**  
**WORSHIP and Reflection - Sunday October 10, 2021**

**SENTENCE:**

*This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. Psalm 118: 24*

**Song: GIVE THANKS WITH A GRATEFUL HEART**

*If you would like to listen or sing along, you may click on this link:*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=047xtru0ZR0>

Give thanks with a grateful heart,

give thanks to the Holy One;

give thanks because he's given Jesus Christ, his Son. (Repeat)

*And now let the weak say, "We are strong!"*

*Let the poor say, "We are rich*

*because of what the Lord has done for us!" (Repeat)*

*Give thanks. Give thanks.*

**GOSPEL READING: MARK 10:17-31**

17 As Jesus 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; Honour 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.' (NRSV)

If you or your young person would like the 'rich young ruler' story video, you may click on this link: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g36\\_A\\_io6sl](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g36_A_io6sl)

**REFLECTION: “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” (Mark 10:17)**

This reflection will also be shared at our Sunday 9:30 am service on Zoom. It will be followed by a time of discussion in break out rooms.

Have you ever had to choose between two things that you valued equally? What if you are standing at the threshold of a new life, which will only happen if you let go of the old? It's not always an easy decision.

Today's gospel reading from the lectionary Mark 10:17-31, tells us of a man who ran to Jesus, knelt before him, and asked him, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” (Mark 10:17). Showing his respect for Jesus, not only in his gesture of kneeling but in his address - “Good teacher.”

Jesus, true to his Jewish tradition and in a true Jesus' way, directs the quality of goodness to God alone. He then reminds the man of parts of the commandments to do with dealings with humans. The man was confident that he has indeed been a fervent adherent of the Law from his youth. (cf. Paul's claim to be blameless under the law, Phil. 3:6).

Jesus “looking at him, loved him and told him the only thing this man lacked was told to sell what he owned, and give the money to the poor, because he will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” (v 21).

The man was shocked at Jesus' response and “went away grieving, for he had many possessions” (v22). Though the text doesn't tell us any further, there could be various reasons for his grieving. He was perhaps a ruler of the synagogue (a Pharisee? cf Luke 18:18, Matt 9:18), successful merchant, owner of land, livestock, and slaves, who had tenanted farmers, and their families, thereby making him part of the small percentage of the higher rung of the society? Perhaps parting with his possession might include giving up his ancestral land and would affect his family's honour? Hence, he might have needed time to process what Jesus just told him. After a time of deliberation, he might have done exactly what Jesus told him to, or maybe not. I think, the point for us is where this story leaves us, or what it triggers in us - action or inaction?

I mentioned in my reflection last Sunday, the perception of wealth and status as God's blessing, was evident in biblical times which was part of the religious culture of Jesus and his disciples. So why would Jesus say it will be difficult (or impossible?) for those who have wealth to enter God's kingdom: *“How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!... 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.”* (v23, 25).

If wealth is God's blessing, a result of our hard work, or that of our parents' or loved ones, whose inheritance enabled us to establish our lives, why is it an obstacle to inheriting eternal life?

Jesus' response does not reflect an exclusion of the wealthy from the reign of God; but focuses on prioritising God over wealth, and on letting go of our attachments. The one thing

that Jesus was asking of the man was to give up his possession! That was a big ask, not just then but now. He was asked to detach himself from everything that afforded him identity, social status, safety network, and sense of security, so he can focus on the more important thing of following Jesus. That is Jesus' response to his question- to inherit eternal life, he must choose the life that Jesus came for all to experience- the fullness of life (John 10:10); that life which begins in the here and now. This life is because of the inheritance that Jesus made possible. No amount of good work we do will earn us the right to eternal life, but by belonging to God in Christ, is our right to inheritance.

Jesus' response to the man also corresponds with the message of the Israelite prophets, that right relationship with God must be reflected in their acts of justice to fellow human beings, not in the external observation of religious rites, e.g., "*... what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?*" Micah 6:8; "*... let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.*" Amos 5:22-24

The gap between the wealthy and the poor is ever increasing; unequal distribution of wealth disadvantages certain sections of society from having a fair go at life. In the current economic environment 'housing market' continues to be a lucrative business for few while continuing to disadvantage struggling families and first home buyers. As someone said, "if the hoarding of wealth is harming the rich, how much more is it harming the poor?" Housing, a basic human right, is now a tradable commodity that benefits the highest bidder. We live in society, where our level of income influences our social connectedness, health outcomes, education, and trust.

Following Jesus goes hand in hand with letting go. What are we willing to let go, so that we may help change the trajectory of another person's life?

The idea of family- whanaungatanga- is a powerful metaphor that we use so often in church circles- e.g., church family, parish family, and family groups. I certainly use the term 'family' a lot. I am so blessed to have a loving and supportive biological family, that I love dearly and miss a lot! I celebrate the gift of my husband and children, and for me, being part of the church family here in Aotearoa is a huge privilege. I understand that family metaphor isn't helpful for some; so perhaps, if we imagine our collective identity as 'friends' or 'people that we associate with' – what is Jesus telling us to do in mitigating vulnerabilities of those in our neighbourhood and beyond? How inclusive and diverse is the outworking of our 'family/friend' relationships?

When we think about the various challenges, we may feel overwhelmed. Mother Teresa /St Teresa of Kolkata captures that sentiment very beautifully, "I can only feed one person at a time...The whole work that I do is only a drop in the ocean. But if I didn't put the drop in, the ocean would be one drop less."

Maybe we have everything in life and are contended with how our lives are, or we have a sense that something is lacking; maybe we are doing enough already or see gaps to be filled; maybe our attachment to possessions is limiting us from participating in the reign of God here and now; what must we do?

In 'Streets of Calcutta to Everyone's Door', St Teresa also said:

"The streets of Calcutta lead to everyone's door, and the very pain, the very ruin of our Calcutta, is the heart's witness to the glory that once was.

I know you think you should make a trip to Calcutta, but I strong advise you to save your airfare, and spend it on the poor in your own country.

It is easy to love the people far away. It is not always easy to love those who live right next to us. There are thousands of people dying for a piece of bread.

There are thousands more dying for a little bit of love, for a little bit of acknowledgement...

People throughout the world may look different or have a different religions, education, or position, but they are all the same.

They are people to be loved. They are all hungry for love."

*(Prayer times with Mother Teresa: A New Adventure in Prayer, 25.)*

#### **PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND INTERCESSION:**

We give thanks to God ....

- for life in Jesus Christ and the hope of eternal life
- for the work of the Holy Spirit that comforts, disturbs, and strengthens us.
- for opportunities to find connections and to build bridges.
- for family, friends, home, and food that sustain us.

We pray that...

- we may seek God and enter into life; for all who seek God in simplicity and humility, for all who find God in their service of others; for all in religious communities, seeking to consecrate their lives to God; for any who have lost their faith or their way.
- for all chocked by their riches, for people possessed by their possessions, for all who are afraid to give and afraid to share, for all who are suffering through the greed of others.
- for all who have sacrificed for us, for all who have enriched our lives by their goodness, for all who have been gracious and generous to us. Teach us to be generous and willing to give.
- for all who are over-worked and the work-weary, for all who lack freedom and suffer through injustice, for all who are denied basic needs, for all who are ill, those awaiting surgery, those faced with difficult decisions, for all who mourn the passing of loved ones;

Lord, give us grace and help in all our needs, through you Son and our Saviour Jesus Christ, Amen.

**Song: BEAUTY FOR BROKENNESS** If you would like to listen or sing along, you may click on this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MO1G-o7Yj-c>

Beauty for brokenness, hope for despair  
Lord, in your suffering, this is our prayer  
Bread for the children, justice, joy, peace  
Sunrise to sunset, Your kingdom increase!

Shelter for fragile lives, cures for their ills  
Work for the craftsman, trade for their skills  
Land for the dispossessed, rights for the weak  
Voices to plead the cause, of those who can't speak.

*God of the poor, friend of the weak  
give us compassion we pray  
Melt our cold hearts, let tears fall like rain  
Come, change our love from a spark to a flame.*

Refuge from cruel wars, havens from fear  
Cities for sanctuary, freedoms to share  
Peace to the killing-fields scorched earth to green  
Christ for the bitterness His cross for the pain.

Rest for the ravaged earth, oceans, and streams  
Plundered and poisoned our future, our dreams  
Lord, end our madness carelessness, greed  
Make us content with the things that we need.

Lighten our darkness Breathe on this flame  
Until your justice burns brightly again  
Until the nations learn of your ways  
Seek your salvation and bring you, their praise.

**BLESSING:**

May God the Creator, whose Son our Lord Jesus Christ, took the form of a servant,  
grant that you may serve God, through serving others;  
and the blessing of God Creator, Redeemer and Giver of life,  
be with you and those you hold in your hearts today and always.

**Amen.**

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Acknowledgement

Prayers adapted from David Adam, *Radiance of His Glory: Prayers for the Church: Year A, B and C*, London: SPCK, 2009