

MAKING THE SEEMINGLY IMPOSSIBLE POSSIBLE

Luke 18:27

(Sermon Summary)

Reading: Luke 18:18-30

In this passage we find ourselves likened to camels! In what way? The Lord uses the illustration of a camel going through the eye of a needle in order to make a point that is at once amusing and serious. The context, following the Lord's interaction with the rich young ruler, is that riches are an obstacle to entering into the kingdom of God. It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. Obviously, a camel cannot squeeze through the eye of a needle. If it is even harder for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God, then this must be the height of what is impossible. The Lord, however, promises that something can be done for the rich man to be able to enter into heaven. God is able to make what seems impossible to become possible.

1. Spiritually impossible.

Spiritual life is what is being spoken about here. Spiritual life is life in the kingdom. It is the life that brings us into the age to come, into heaven (v30). Yet spiritual life is beyond the reach of man trying to obtain it on his own. The rich young ruler tried to enter by obeying the law (Luke 18:18-23). He was unable to offer the kind of obedience that the Lord would require if we were going to enter heaven on our own merits. So, the rich young ruler went away very sorrowful (v23). He was unable to let go of his money and the trust that he was putting in it (v22). Like a camel attempting to get through the eye of a needle, there was no way through for him to God's favour and heaven by obeying the law. He, like many of us, had his focus just on this life, keeping a hold of those things that made him secure, unwilling to part with them or to put his trust in something else. His hope was to be able to survive in this life and, more than that, to be able to enjoy his pleasures with peace and security.

It is one of the biggest obstacles to people believing in the Lord in the West that they have so much wealth. They have so many material resources that this life becomes everything to them. The opportunities to be happy and fulfilled through wealth, and what it gives, means that they have little thought or appetite for eternal things and the welfare of their souls. This last century has been a story in the West, but increasingly in other parts of the world too, of the triumph of materialism. The standards of living

achievable now have left people feeling that they have no need of God. It has led to a deadening effect upon the conscience.

The disciples made a mistake that was common in that age, and still is in parts of the world today, and in some parts of the professing church. That idea is that material wealth is a sign of divine blessing. That seemed to lie behind the disciples' expression of shock in v26. Today, although in the West, there is a cultural reaction against materialism, it has not spiritually got us any further because one of the ideas, popular now, is that we have riches within ourselves that lie untapped. So there are techniques like mindfulness to tap into and release those resources so that we can be authentic and fulfilled people. But those 'riches' do not work either but fill us with unspiritual ideas of self achievement that bring us no closer to God and entering into the kingdom of heaven. Or the idea that the pandemic has made us think, that there are great resources of neighbourliness and community that the crisis has unearthed. Again, good though much of this might be, it is not good enough to help us reach heaven. Because sin makes 'camels' of us all.

2. God makes the impossible possible.

Obviously, the Lord is not talking here about shrinking us so that we can fulfill what is needed to go to heaven. Yet the Lord can change us so that we can now meet the criteria to be able to come into His presence. He can make our lives fit the requirements of the law absolutely and perfectly. The life that does please God has been lived already on our behalf. It was lived by our Lord Jesus Christ. He delighted to live out the law of God and to obey all its precepts. He was able, sharing our own humanity, to enter into heaven and sit down at the right hand of God. So, while the disciples were marveling at the seeming impossibility of a rich man being able to enter the kingdom of God, the Person who was standing before them was able to make that happen. He could make a gift of His perfection to them so they would qualify to be able to go through the 'eye of the needle' of God's law.

So, we have to ask about ourselves. We are on the wrong side of the needle's eye and we need that work of God, the seeming impossible, to happen to us, so that we can enter heaven. Until this miracle takes place in our own experience, then we are facing the second death that the Bible speaks about. We are left to wonder, 'Can our sin be left behind? Can we get rid of the obstacle that it is to our finding God and the glory of the age to come?' The cross tells us that our sins can be left behind and the Lord of glory has Himself undertaken to make the impossible possible by dying in the place of His people, to carry away their sins, to lighten their burdens, and to remove the obstacle to their entering into heaven. By faith in Him, the impossible now becomes the possible.

3. It is so important.

We need to realize urgently that this life is not everything. It is the next life that really is everything. That is not to say that we dismiss this life and do not attempt to do anything meaningful or useful. By having the security of knowing that we are in good standing with the Lord, it gives us the resources to actually be more useful to our fellow man.

But we must be parted from our sin. We cannot enter into heaven with our sins still attached to us. We are to repent and leave behind uncleanness, immorality, greed, self-centredness, obsession with riches and this life to the exclusion of all else. We have to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ to carry us through, to atone for our sins by His own precious blood. We believe in Him for remedy for our inability to be able to enter heaven. We trust in His resurrection as proof of His honour and his worthiness to enter heaven on our behalf.

We should not, like the rich young ruler, go away sad. Do not settle for no upheaval in the life or lose heaven because you were looking for a different deal or arrangement. Agree to what the Lord in the Bible is showing you. Submit to its revelation and trust in the Lord to do the impossible for you.