



Wealth and the Kingdom of God

3rd Wednesday of Lent

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!' 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! 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.' They were greatly astounded and said to one another, 'Then who can be saved?' Jesus looked at them and said, 'For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible.'

Mark 10:23-27

They stood there dumbfounded as the wealthy, would-be disciple sadly walked away from Jesus. *How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God*, Jesus told them, and the disciples were *perplexed*. Traditionally wealth was understood as the sign of God's blessing, God's special favor. For Jesus to see it as a hindrance to one's entrance into the kingdom of God was totally confusing.

This scene provides a contrast to the one that precedes it—the one about children. There Jesus told them that one enters the kingdom of God through simple trust in God's promises. Here, though, the cost of kingdom life is stressed. Twice Jesus declares: *How hard it will be. . . . Yet, with God all things are possible.*"

Wealth can be a blessing or a curse. It's what we do with it that makes the difference. Do you possess your possessions or do they possess you? Is wealth an end in itself for you or a means to an end? How do you distinguish need from desire? How much do you keep and how much do you share? What would happen if you were to lose it all?

Jesus repeatedly affirms that life is to be found not in the accumulation of things, but in freeing ourselves from things. Fullness of life is found not in filling it up, but in pouring it out. The more we try to fill it, the emptier it becomes. The more we pour it out, the greater it overflows.

Prayer: Thank you, Lord, for the blessings that fill my life. Help me to use all that I am and all that I have in such a way that you are glorified and your kingdom is served. Amen.