

Today we have another parable from Jesus that is commonly known as the rich young ruler although in Mark, he is not referred to as a ruler. This man is known to have turned his back on God because he was not willing to give up his possessions. And from this encounter, we have the very familiar saying, "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."

The rich young ruler is one of those unique characters from the Bible that have come to represent greed. He wanted to be saved but not at the expense of losing his possessions.

But even though most people just see the negative in regard to this young man, there are some positive things about him as well.

First off, this man was religious. He knew about God and eternal life and wanted to know how to achieve that life. He knew that there was something more to this life and he did not want to miss out and so he approached Jesus to find out the answers to his questions.

The second positive about this man was that he was humble. When he approached Jesus, the man knelt before him and called him "good teacher". He knew that Jesus was at the very least a prophet and so he humbled himself and knelt before Jesus and then listened to what he had to say.

But as he was listening, Jesus shared some things that were difficult for the man to accept. First, he wanted a rule to keep. He wanted to be told exactly what he had to do in order to receive eternal life. The only problem is that there is no rule, just a belief in God. And for us, specifically, belief in how Jesus died on the cross for you.

The second issue that the man had was his love of money. He was willing to do just about anything to receive eternal life, but giving up his wealth was not it. In fact, his love of money caused him to walk away. He wanted his possessions and giving them up was not negotiable.

Since the man chose his wealth over the kingdom of God, the disciples asked who could be saved and Jesus said, for humans it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible. That is where our hope lies. Yes, we cannot possibly do anything on our own merits to reach heaven, which is why God bridged that gap between heaven and us with Jesus. God did what we could not.

For God, all things are possible unless we turn and walk away. This man was so close to the Kingdom of God. He asked Jesus the right questions. He understood the Law and unlike the disciples most of the time, he understood his teachings. But in the end, the love of money kept him out.

God's love is meant for each one of us and is freely given to us. This love will lead us to eternal life and all we need to do is believe. Jesus gave his life out of his love for us so that we would not have to die. Outside of believing in him, there is nothing left for us to do.

And yet, even that is not good enough because there are still some who turn and walk away. Just like the young ruler, some are not always willing to put God first. Sometimes, people want to call the shots and when it comes to heaven, God is the one who calls the shots.

So there are two good lessons for us to learn through this parable. First, outside of our belief in the saving actions of Jesus the Christ, there are no rules that will get us into heaven. None. Just a trust and belief in what God accomplished through Jesus.

And our second lesson is that God must be first in our lives. If you put anything above God on your priority list for your life, then you are turning and walking away from God.