

Aldersgate UMC of Butte, MT
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Sunday, October 10, 2021

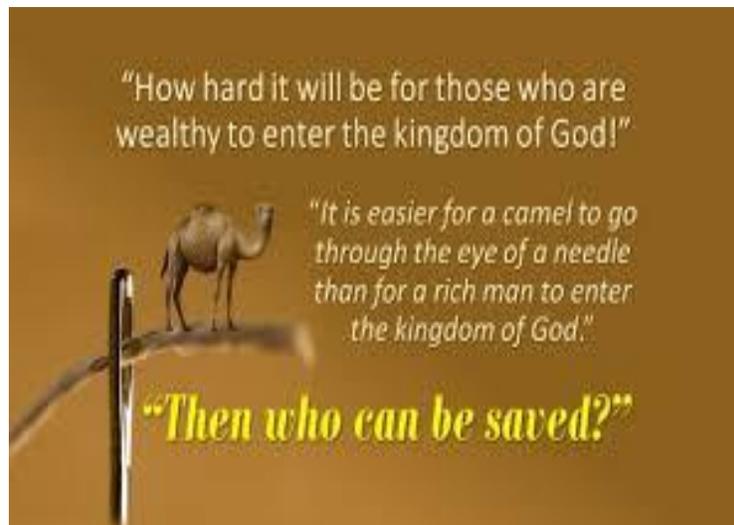
Message *And Come Follow Me* Pastor Matthias Krier

There is a great deal to ponder in this passage and there is no way we can address everything but I would like to begin with the last verse of this passage being, *“Many who are first will end up last, and the last first.”* How many of you wore hand me downs growing up from older siblings or cousins? Okay, now how many of you appreciated wearing those hand me downs? Well neither did this young man illustrated here:



This passage from our Christian lectionary has caused me to ask myself the question: Am I truly following Yeshua or not? Or do I just think that I am following Jesus?

While there is so much to contemplate in this passage from no one is good but God alone to this eye of the needle thing in this verse:



There is scholarly debate about what the eye of the needle was and whether or not it is an actual eye of a tiny needle or whether the eye of a needle was a gate in the wall of Jerusalem. Interesting debate, but is not our subject for today. Either way, Yeshua was illustrating just how difficult it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God, so the disciples asked, "Then who can be saved?"

27 Jesus was blunt: *"No chance at all if you think you can pull it off by yourself. Every chance in the world if you let God do it."*

It is essential that we hear this clearly because whenever we believe something is impossible, we hear these words, *"With God all things are possible."*

So how is this possible for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God?

"By the grace of God!"

One of the reasons I say that I am striving to be a disciple of Christ it's because of scripture passages like these. I'd like to think that I am a

follower of Yeshua, but am I? I no longer call myself a disciple of Christ as I did several decades ago. **Why not?**

Some of you may or may not remember the story around my Sufi mystic Muslim friend from a mountain community in Colorado. I asked Steve one time how he wanted to be introduced on a faith panel with other religious leaders with about a hundred people from the community ... And he thought about it and said well if you must introduce me, introduce me as someone who is *striving to be a Sufi Muslim mystic*. I asked him why the word *striving*? He said, "because I can never fully arrive here on earth as a Sufi Muslim mystic.

I reflected on this and realized I could no longer call myself a disciple of Jesus. I realized at best that I am striving to be a disciple of Yeshua. I, like Steve, will never fully arrive as an actual disciple in this lifetime.

Keep in mind from our scripture passage for today that this young man was saying that he was doing all that he could to obey the law and that he had done it his whole life. And he wanted to know what more he could do to inherit eternal life. And here's what Jesus did and then said:

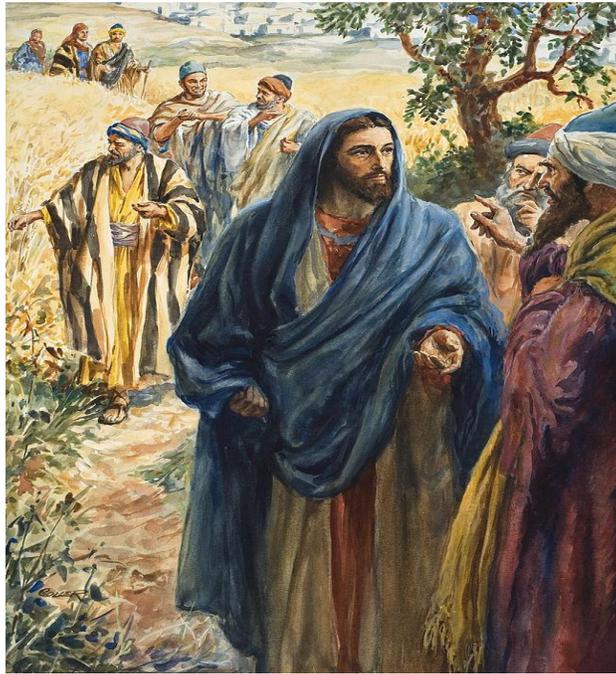
21 Jesus looked him hard in the eye—and loved him! He said, "There's one thing left: Go sell whatever you own and give it to the poor. All your wealth will then be heavenly wealth. And come follow me."

22 The man's face clouded over. This was the last thing he expected to hear, and he walked off with a heavy heart. He was holding on tight to a lot of things, and not about to let go.

The man was disheartened by what Yeshua was asking of him, so he walked away with a heavy heart. He walked away with a heavy heart because he put the things he held so tightly before God. **This begs the question of what it is that we need to let go to follow Yeshua more deeply? What is it that we are hanging onto too tightly?** These are heavy duty questions to ponder are they not? In following Jesus, we begin

with the first step and then step by step, Yeshua will lead us in the Way in which to live and move and have our being. We begin with trusting in this journey and where it will lead.

I try and imagine Jesus looking into my eyes without judgment:



Come and Follow Me

But with all the love and compassion Yeshua holds for me and then says,
“Come and follow me.”

Jesus is holding out his hand to each and everyone of us to come and follow. But these timid disciples later became apostles. And what is an apostle?

Definition of apostle from Merriam-Webster Dictionary

: one sent on a mission: such as

: one of an authoritative New Testament group sent out to preach the gospel and made up especially of Christ's 12 original disciples and Paul

So now this begs the question about who we are called to be and what we are called to do as those striving to be disciples, just as Jesus' disciples were anointed to do.

Does this mean as those who are striving to be Yeshua's disciples that we are also called to be anointed as apostles? Hear from Rebekah Simon-Peter has to say on this:

*What's the difference between a "disciple" and an "apostle?" The word disciple comes from the Latin *discipulus*, meaning scholar. A disciple is a student of Jesus' whose primary focus is on mastering his teachings so that he or she can live out Jesus' way.*

*An apostle, however, has a different focus. The word apostle derives from the Greek *apostolos* meaning envoy. While disciples are students, apostles are proactive agents, who act on behalf of the one who has sent them. In today's language, we might say that disciples are followers and apostles are leaders. But there's more to it.*

The biggest difference between disciples and apostles is that apostles possess a qualitatively different kind of faith than disciples. Disciples have faith in Jesus. Apostles, on the other hand, have the faith of Jesus. Otherwise, there's no way apostles could do what Jesus did.

Dream Like Jesus by Rebekah Simon-Peter

Who are we called to be and what are we called to do?

Followers (*Disciples*) to Leaders (*Apostles*)

Faith in Jesus to Faith of Jesus

If the church is to thrive, and not just survive, we must get beyond being a student and become anointed as apostles, as leaders to bring the good news of hope, peace, joy, love, harmony, equality and justice for all who live on the margins of society.

And how would this be possible? By the Grace of God!

Let us pray: By the grace of God, great things can happen as we move from discipleship to apostleship on our faith journey. Inspire and empower us to do just that as we live out who we are called to be and what we are called to do. **Amen and so be it!**