

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Mark 10: 23-34

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the Bible again. We'll continue to read Mark chapter 10, verses 23 to 34.

We read before that there was a rich young officer who came to ask Jesus what he should do to inherit eternal life? Jesus told him to sell all his possessions and give the proceeds to the poor, and then come and follow him. This man, because he had great wealth and possessions, went away feeling sad. What happened after this incident?

Verse 23: "Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, 'How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!'"

Because Jesus also truly loved this young officer, when he chose to depart sorrowfully, Jesus also deeply sighed and spoke about how difficult it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God.

Verse 24: "And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, 'Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God!'"

This statement by Jesus pointed out the difficulty of that young officer—he relied on wealth. He came from a very privileged background, with wealth and status. If you trust in your wealth, if you rely on your status, you will not be able to enter the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is the domain where God has complete authority. When the power of money and the power of status are greater than the authority of God, you will not be able to enter the kingdom of God.

Verse 25: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

This statement has a background: in the city of Jerusalem, there were several city gates, which were very large. When they opened, camels carrying goods could pass through. During the day, the gates were open, but at dusk they closed, leaving a smaller gate beside them called the Needle Gate. For a camel loaded with goods to pass through this Needle Gate, all the goods had to be unloaded, and the camel had to bend down to pass through, then the goods were loaded back onto the camel. Therefore, for a camel to pass through the Needle Gate was a very difficult task. Jesus used this example to say that 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.

We notice from verses 23 to 25, Jesus spoke three times about the kingdom of God. To enter the kingdom of God, we must let God reign in us. Those who rely on wealth, power, or status, God cannot fully reign in them, so they cannot enter the kingdom of God.

Verse 26: "And they were greatly astonished, saying among themselves, 'Who then can be saved?'"

Not only did the disciples at that time find it strange, but we probably feel the same today. Hearing Jesus say such words, with such high standards for the kingdom of God, who then can be saved? This question is actually inaccurate; it should be who can enter the kingdom of God? Of course, being saved is a necessary condition to enter the kingdom of God, so in a sense, the disciples' question is not wrong. Jesus responded according to the question asked by the disciples.

Verse 27: "But Jesus looked at them and said, 'With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible.'"

Yes, from a human perspective, it is difficult for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God. But once they are saved, once God's life is in them, with God, all things are possible. Today, we are the same. After being saved, we all know that we still lack many good spiritual qualities. But Jesus encourages us that what is impossible for humans is possible with God. As long as we are willing to follow Jesus, willing to honor Jesus as great, willing to let God's life grow within us, then God's life will naturally obey God's authority, and entering the kingdom of God will not be so difficult.

Verse 28: "Then Peter began to say to Him, 'See, we have left all and followed You.'"

When Peter was called, he left his boat and followed Jesus. James and John did the same. Today, under the sovereignty of God, God also gives us many things. If we can refrain from being possessed by what we have, and even be willing to leave behind what we possess for the sake of God, then we can boldly say like Peter: 'See, we have left all and followed You.' In fact, if we are honest with ourselves about our lives, we will find that ultimately, we only truly possess time. You spend your time earning money, buying cars, buying houses, buying all the things you like with money. And eventually, after a period of time, the car becomes old, the house becomes old, everything you bought with money is temporary, and what you lose in the process is your time. In the first half of our lives, we are so busy striving that we don't have much time to reflect on what we have gained and lost. In the second half, as time decreases little by little, you will feel it more strongly. Is it really worth it? If we can truly let go of what we pursue to follow Jesus, Paul tells us that we can redeem the time, that is, exchange this limited time now for eternity in the future. After hearing Peter's declaration like this,

Verse 29-30: "So Jesus answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now

in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life."

Jesus's answer is truly wonderful. When we leave behind things for the sake of the Lord and the gospel, whether it's family, relationships, or possessions, God promises us a hundredfold in this present age. What does it mean to receive a hundredfold in this present age? As Jesus said, the relationships of brothers and sisters. Originally, you may have only had a few relatives, but once you are baptized and become a Christian, when you come into the church, the 100 brothers and sisters in the church are your brothers and sisters, and your relationship with them may be even closer than with your own siblings. Isn't this receiving a hundredfold in this present age?

Of course, in addition to these blessings, Jesus added another statement, saying that we will also face persecution, as if persecution is included among these blessings. Many times, through persecution, we are more easily able to let go, and the more we let go in this life, the more we empty our hands, the more we can receive God's blessings. Therefore, Jesus teaches that God's promise is to receive a hundredfold in this present age, along with persecution, but in the age to come, eternal life will be granted. The age to come refers to when Christ returns and establishes His kingdom on earth for a thousand years. Those who are willing to leave everything for the sake of the Lord and the gospel in this life, and joyfully accept persecution, are the victorious ones who will share in God's reward when Christ returns. In the age to come, when Christ establishes His kingdom, they will enjoy the blessings of eternal life.

Verse 31: "But many who are first will be last, and the last first."

Here, Jesus encourages the twelve disciples not to be content with their current situation but to continue moving forward. Because those who are ahead, if they become proud and complacent, will become last, while those who are behind, as long as they continue to strive, will become first. Although the twelve disciples had already left everything to follow Jesus, their journey was not yet over, and they still needed to be vigilant and strive forward. This is also a good reminder for every saint

today. Paul sets himself as an example, encouraging every saint in Philippians 3:13-14 "Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." This reminds every saved saint to continue moving forward, striving until we finish the journey of life, in order to partake in the reward of the kingdom.

Continuing from verse 32 to 34, it records Jesus telling His disciples for the third time that He would go up to Jerusalem to suffer, die, and be resurrected on the third day. After this, Jesus indeed entered Jerusalem and began His final week of ministry on earth. At this time, besides the 12 disciples, there were also some other followers alongside Jesus.

Verse 32: "Now they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was going before them; and they were amazed. And as they followed, they were afraid. Then He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them the things that would happen to Him:"

They were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, which marked the last half-year of Jesus's ministry. He now set his face steadfastly toward Jerusalem. He knew that there he would be crucified for the sins of all. Therefore, everything He did and said carried a different atmosphere. 'Jesus went before them; and they were amazed. And as they followed, they were afraid.' Undoubtedly, as Jesus approached Jerusalem, there was an atmosphere of solemnity and awe surrounding Him due to His firm resolve.

Perhaps when Jesus answered the rich young ruler about how to inherit eternal life, it was truly a daunting response. This young ruler had status, humility, and obedience to the law. But what was the result? Jesus told him to sell all his possessions, give to the poor, and then come and follow Him. Such words indeed instilled fear and uncertainty about how to follow. Hence, those who followed were also afraid. At this moment, Jesus's heart was actually on His twelve disciples. In fact, when Jesus came to earth, the focal point of His ministry was these twelve individuals because He knew that one day, after His death, resurrection, and

ascension, these twelve disciples would be entrusted with carrying on the ministry. So Jesus once again called the twelve disciples and told them what He was going to face. Jesus had repeated the same thing again and again, perhaps realizing that they had not fully understood. Therefore, Jesus patiently reiterated it to them once more.

Verse 33: "'Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles;'"

Jesus's words are indeed clear. He will be betrayed to the chief priests and the scribes, and what follows? "They will condemn Him to death, and then deliver Him to the Gentiles."

Verse 34: "and they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again."

The description in the Gospel of Mark is extremely concise, summarizing important events and processes in just a few words. We can see that Jesus' words left a profound impression on Peter's mind. However, before these events unfolded, Jesus had spoken to His twelve disciples many times, yet they seemed to completely misunderstand. For us, it seems to be the same. When we read the scriptures, many times we read through them without leaving any impression, and even though we've read them, they don't leave any impression in our minds, until one day, we encounter certain situations, and under God's sovereignty, certain circumstances arise, and the verses we've read help us navigate through those situations, and then those verses become alive to us, they come alive before our eyes, and are etched in our minds. I strongly believe that at that moment, Peter may not have understood fully, but after about six months, following Jesus' actions on the cross and much reflection, Jesus' words became very real to him. Therefore, when he described them to Mark, Mark wrote them so succinctly.

What was Jesus going to do in Jerusalem? He would be handed over to the chief priests and scribes, condemned to death, delivered to the Gentiles, and then what? They would mock Him, spit on Him, scourge Him, kill Him, but after three days, He would rise again. The truths in the Bible need to be personally experienced and lived out, and only then do these truths become real to us.

Today's passage tells us about the third condition for entering the kingdom of God, which is to leave everything behind and follow Christ. This letting go is not a one-time event but a continuous process in our daily lives, continually letting go and continually receiving. What we let go of are the sinful desires and pursuits of wealth and status in our old selves, and what we receive are peace in life and spiritual richness. God knows this is not an easy road, so He has prepared the church and church life for us, so that saints can encourage one another and run together on the path of heaven.

Let us pray together: Lord, we thank You once again that on the path to the kingdom of God, You call us to take up our cross and follow You. We must continually learn to let go, and we thank You for continually providing for us. You have surrounded us with many spiritual companions and prepared rich church life for us, allowing us to experience a hundredfold in this life. Grant us the determination to forget what lies behind and press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Bless each day of our lives, we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen!