

LAST SHALL BE FIRST

By Todd Core

SCRIPTURE

Mark 10:17-31

And he said to him (Jesus), "Teacher, all these I have kept from youth." And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing: go sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. (Mark 10:20-22)

OBSERVATION

As each of us seek to understand our current circumstances, it is important to search for God's desired response from His children. A quick peruse over social media gives a wide range of responses from people to the challenges to our communities. Stories abound about hoarding toilet paper and Purell to heartwarming stories of assisting neighbors with groceries. One attribute we know the Lord desires in us is that we are to be sacrificial servants and not selfish. The passage above has always been challenging to me. The young man conversing with Jesus seems to be a pious guy who is earnestly seeking the path to eternal life. He has even sought to obey the 10 Commandments. Then Jesus looks into his heart to determine what one area the young man would hoard for himself and be unwilling to give to God. I love how Mark's account of this dialogue includes the detail that Jesus "looked at him and loved him." So out of love Jesus asked him to remove the barrier of earthly money to obtain treasure in heaven. Then a very sobering verse is written. The young man was disheartened and left sad. Here are a few thoughts on how these verses relate to us today:

- Is it possible that out of God's love He is using these uncertain days to remove some of the barriers we have erected between us and Him? For the first time in a long time, most of our schedules are cleared, many are freshly aware of their dependence on Him for finances, and the frailness of our bodies is at the forefront of our collective consciousness. Will we leave this unique time in history dejected like the rich young ruler or will we leave as disciples like Peter?
- This passage is a keen reminder that we need to have an eternal perspective. The rich young ruler was unwilling to trade cash in hand for treasures in heaven. How may the Lord be asking us to make sacrifices today in order to advance the eternal kingdom of God?
- Jesus concludes this interaction with the disciples by reminding them that "the first shall be last and the last shall be first." God very well may be orchestrating another Great Awakening of His church in our world. In times of fear and uncertainty, those far from God will be looking for hope, and Jesus has the market

cornered on hope. How can we humble ourselves to be servants and join the ranks of “the last” so that our community will know hope?

OBEDIENCE

Now that we have wrestled with the text, here are some practical ways to be obedient to the message. These are simply suggestions and thought starters, but we pray the Lord will use them to help you be obedient to Him.

- Ask God to reveal to you any barriers that you have erected between you and Him. Ask Him to show you how to be obedient to removing them and any changes that need to be made as we emerge from this unprecedented time in our lives.
- Identify any resources that you have in abundance that you could share with a neighbor or life group member.
- Find at least one way to humble yourself to serve one person in your household or neighborhood today.
- Delight and praise God for loving you in the midst of a difficult time.
- Share the hope you have with someone this week when they sound fearful or uncertain about the future.

PRAYER

Father, thank You for loving us despite the fact that we put these barriers between us and You. Give us wisdom for planning for the needs of our families and also how to hold onto things loosely. Give us eyes to see the needs around us. Help us to connect to Your eternal perspective on this time in our history. Help us to build treasure in heaven by serving sacrificially and giving freely to the needs around us. May we show the hope of Christ to our community and join God in what He is doing.