



Part IV : The road to Jerusalem

Readings for the week : Mark 8:22-10:52

Introduction

- **Pray:** Take a few moments of silence and invite the Holy Spirit to guide your discussion.
- **Share:**
 - Last week we looked at the sending out of Jesus' disciples as messengers of the Good News. How did you experience your call to be messengers in word and deed this week?
 - What did you learn from this week's reading?

Brief Summary of Mark 8:22-10:52

- This section begins and ends with the healing of a blind man.
- Jesus predicts three times that he will be betrayed, put to death and resurrected. His disciples don't understand and even oppose him. Jesus takes the opportunity to teach them about the true meaning of discipleship.
- The expression "on the way" is repeated several times in this passage, marking the ministry's transition from Galilee to Jerusalem (the place of the cross and the resurrection).

Excerpt - Money in the life of the disciple

Reread Mk 10:17-31

- To fully understand this discussion with the rich man and the disciples, it's important to note that it takes place just after Jesus' teaching that the Kingdom belongs to those who have no social status and are denigrated, like children. But it's also important to note that it comes just before Jesus' third announcement of how the Kingdom of God will be fulfilled (through his death and resurrection). So we understand that Mark comes to teach us about the path of discipleship: the Kingdom of God is seized by people who find their identity and value in God alone, not in material gain or social status.
- Human history and the Bible reveal that one of the most destructive forces in history is an unhealthy relationship with money and wealth (Cf. 1 Tim 6:10: the love of money is the root of all evil!).
- You don't have to be rich to be greedy. The human heart is such that we are all threatened by the power of money:
 - always wanting just a little more, being neither grateful nor satisfied
 - being insensitive to the needs of others
 - putting our trust in our own strength rather than in God's generosity.
- For Jesus, money is not just a tool, it can also become an unhealthy power that enslaves us (MATTHEW 6:24 "No one can serve two masters: either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will cling to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.")
- In the Bible, God seeks to educate his people in their relationship with wealth. He wants to transform the hearts of his people so that they are truly free in relation to wealth. God wants to teach his people to live generously and to fight against the ravages of greed.
- In this passage, the rich man addresses Jesus as "good." This is certainly a kind of flattery that we might find innocent, but Jesus refuses to play the game of flattery; he refuses to be bought or manipulated by rhetoric. The problem with this man is precisely what he's trying to gain through manipulation.
- The man seems to show real piety. Mark takes the trouble to note (this is very rare) that Jesus "loved him" (v.21). On the other hand, it's clear from the start of the conversation that this man has no intention of entering the kingdom "like a child" (v.15). He is one of the important and powerful. Jesus' call to follow him as a disciple resembles the call Jesus made to his other disciples: give up what you have to follow me. This call is not the only one that exists in the kingdom of God (for example, the possessed man in Mk. 5 is not called to follow Jesus, but to return home to bring the Good News). There are different ways of being a disciple of Jesus, but Jesus knows that what this man needs is to become dependent on God alone, and lose the status he cherishes so dearly in his heart, to become a child. Mark tells us that this man has accumulated too much wealth to consider this offer as Good News (cf. v. 22).
- V.23: "Jesus looked at his disciples around him and said to them, 'How difficult it will be for those with wealth to enter the kingdom of God!'" His disciples panic because they're still operating with the world's understanding that rich people with power and influence are really the people who are most important to God. But Jesus takes the opportunity to teach them, this time not rebuking them harshly but calling them his "children" which is a nod to v.15.

- In v.24, we realize that Jesus is not just talking about the rich. It's hard for anyone to enter God's reign. It is difficult (if not impossible) for anyone to abandon the primal instinct to seek their own well-being above all else. It requires a radical change of the human heart to be able to abandon one's own projects, ambitions and manipulative strategies. It is such a change that it is compared to someone who voluntarily chooses the death penalty (crucifixion).
- Discuss verses 23 to 27 together: how do you understand Jesus' message about entering the Kingdom of God? Is it good or bad news? How do you understand God's grace in this passage? Do the disciples deserve more credit than the rich young man?
- Then read verses 28 to 31:
 - In some biblical passages, it seems that wealth is promised to those who love God and do righteousness (e.g. Deut 28:1-14). But the book of Job shows us that reality is not so simple. In this world, despite God's goodness and justice, the righteous can suffer in incomprehensible ways.
 - What does this passage from Mark reveal about the nature of God's blessing for those who live with Jesus in his Kingdom?

Applying this message to our lives

The wealth of the disciple

- Are you rich? If we compare ourselves to the people we see in the newspapers or those around us, we find ourselves either rather poor (compared to Elon Musk) or rather average (compared to your next-door neighbor). It's likely, however, that if you're reading these lines, you're one of the 10% richest people on the planet (and in the history of mankind). How do you react to this idea?
- As we've seen, Jesus doesn't ask his disciples to give everything automatically or thoughtlessly. However, it's clear that for Jesus the issue of finances is an extremely important one: it's about manifesting the goodness and justice of the Kingdom (by practicing generosity and solidarity) but also about clinging to God as the only savior (refusing to rely on financial security and social status).
- Take time to pray and listen to the Holy Spirit.
- How is God calling you to take a step forward in the area of finances?
- What kind of practices could you put in place to detach yourself from too strong an attachment to wealth and develop a generous heart?
- Here are some important practices for Christians:
- Dedicate your first share (10% of your income) to serving your local church.
 - Dedicate part of your budget to generosity (humanitarian work, personal support).
 - Keep a budget and be vigilant about where your spending goes.
 - Make a "fast" of compulsive purchases (limit spending for a season).

For more information on this series, or for more resources to help you move forward with God, please contact Ruben (ruben.binyet@icf-ge.ch).

To deepen and mature in your faith, consider registering for the next ICF-College session ([info on icf-ge.ch](http://info.on.icf-ge.ch)).