Spirituality
Pencil Preaching





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“Amen, I say to you, it will be hard for one who is rich to enter the Kingdom of heaven” (Matt 19:23).

Ez 28:1-10; *Matt 19:23-30*

The hard saying Jesus utters regarding a rich man entering the Kingdom shocked his disciples, who in that time and culture saw wealth as a sign of favor from God. Jesus saw instead how material possessions preoccupied the rich, consuming them and distracting them from the more important gifts of life—relationships, community, intellectual and spiritual development, humility and dependence on God. A rich man became like a fully loaded camel trying to get through a narrow door.

We see this mentality in the rich man who comes to Jesus to ask how he can guarantee his place in heaven. He thinks like a rich man. He has amassed virtue by keeping the commandments, but he wants to top off his spiritual wealth with something more. Jesus challenges his *quid pro quo* approach to earning heaven by telling him to go and sell all his possessions, strip off his status and influence to come on the road as a disciple.

For Jesus, entry into the Kingdom was not a quantitative gain but a qualitative leap into grace, a total surrender to a relationship with God, which is a pure gift. The man

cannot buy this gift or earn it with his virtue. He is too full of himself to receive God into his life.

This paradox confronts us all. We can come before God only with empty hands and open hearts. The love we have is the love we give away. Our emptiness and powerlessness are what enables us to receive the gift of life only God can give. We enter this discipleship each day when we surrender ourselves to God, who will give us everything we need to find true wealth and abundant life.

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