

**Mark 10 21-23<sup>21</sup> 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.”**

This is one of the scariest verses in the Bible. You may rightly say, “I know Jesus loves me, and that is wonderful, but let’s be real. I have kids, bills, and responsibilities.” Ok, so let’s take a deep breath. Jesus understands family obligations. He, just like you and me, had family responsibilities and worries. Jesus was the first born of four younger brothers and two sisters (Mark 6:3), and we know that sometime after he was 12 years old, his earthly father died, and that made Jesus primary provider for his family. Jesus took over the family business and cared for his family until age 30. His leaving of the family business was likely not appreciated by his brothers, because it meant at least a 25% drop in household income.

So why would Jesus put this type of pressure on such a responsible and successful man? Jesus recognizes that this person kneeling before him was a God-fearing man, who is keeping God’s commandments, and who has been righteously successful in living his life up until this encounter with Jesus. But Jesus also recognizes that the man’s heart is worried about obtaining everlasting life (the one thing he doesn’t own, nor can he buy). This man knows his treasures are fleeting, like vapor, impermanent as is his soul that enjoys these divine blessings. This man kneeling before Jesus knows, like the author of Ecclesiastes, that he will DIE. His success in life and his riches have protected him from hunger and many of life’s pains, but his heart knows he will experience that great human equalizer: the reality of death is approaching for us all. How does Jesus respond?

Jesus sees fear in his eyes, hears it in his voice, and listens to the man’s heartfelt plea for everlasting life and peace. Jesus’ response is a compassionate invitation to love him out of his misery. Jesus offers a relational cure to the man’s spiritual/existential problem, a way into everlasting life at that moment with Jesus, as well as a way into the Kingdom of God. With a loving heart, Jesus invites the man into intimate fellowship with him when he says, “Sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.”

What does Jesus’ teaching and wisdom so many years ago mean to you and I today in 2024? “Blessed are the poor, and poor in Spirit,” because they are emotionally and physically free to say, “YES, I am all-in Jesus! Let’s go! I want to hang out with the incarnate God of the Universe.” Jesus is the divine soul who says to this anxious brother to come follow me. Jesus is also the divine soul who comforted another brother dying on the cross next to him with the promise, “Today you and I will be in paradise.” Jesus experienced life as divine abundance, and he invites us to experience this same kind of life.

**The practice of Imaginative Prayer.** Re-read the Bible scriptures and meditation above, and picture yourself before Jesus and praying your life situation. Are you successful, but still feeling there must be more to life, or are you feeling like you are at death’s door? As you read, imagine Christ looking into your eyes, into your soul. Express what you want from Him. What troubles you? What distracts you? What pulls on your heart? Then listen to His response and His invitations. What anxious attachments are keeping you from saying “YES, I am all-in Jesus.” “You can have my whole heart, my whole life, and you can be my everlasting love!”

Stay with this imaginative meditation and prayer. Explore what your anxious heart clings to, and imagine letting go of it for a few moments, and tasting what it feels like to be free from it, free to enter paradise with Jesus, who loves you, and wants to be your closest friend. Our souls are hopelessly longing for true love. Life generally only brings a few best friends and loved ones into our lives, and only one everlasting love. Who is your most treasured love?