

Jesus C.F.O (Week 1): With God, It's Possible  
**Yesterday's Sermon - In 12 Bullet Points**

1) Yesterday we began a series on four key passages in the gospels where Jesus talks about money and possessions, hence the series title "Jesus C.F.O." (or Jesus - Chief Financial Officer).

2) Our first text was one of the more striking, shocking, and perhaps sobering in all the gospels, a story told in three of the four gospels, our version being Mark 10.17-27.

3) After Jesus' interaction with the wealthy man who had much, we as the readers are left to respond just like the disciples did - we're dumbfounded and panicked.

4) But it's important to remember that everything Jesus said and did in the story was motivated by His love for that man (10.21).

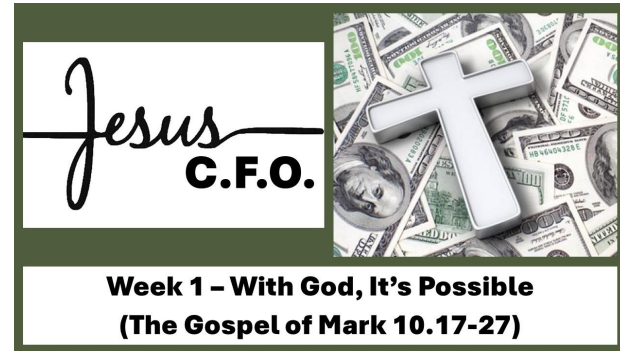
5) First, Jesus loves us so that He wants us to know that experiencing heavenly life in the here and now necessarily involves every facet of who we are, including our money and stuff.

6) Like the man in the story, we compartmentalize spiritually: we too easily fashion a version of spirituality that prohibits God from influencing or even seeing (we think) different parts of our lives, and, also like the man, this compartmentalizing leaves us empty and yearning for more.

7) Second, Jesus loves us, so He has to let us know that to have too much is to ignore that others have too little: our money isn't just our money, our stuff isn't just our stuff, and we who are blessed with both are meant to bless others with it.

8) In the telltale detail of the story (10.19), Jesus conflates coveting with defrauding: when we desire what we do not need and do not have, and believe that getting it will somehow make us happy, we inevitably deprive others of what we could give or supply to them in the process.

9) God's intent is the end of poverty, in fact that mission is key to how Jesus announces His own ministry in Nazareth (see Luke 4.16, when Jesus says He will "bring good news to the poor"): as Rev. Liz Theoharis (PCUSA; Poor People's Campaign) writes in her book *Always with Us – What Jesus Really Said about the Poor*: "Rather than stating that poverty is unavoidable and predetermined by God, poverty is created by human beings – by their disobedience to God and neglect of their neighbor. Jesus shows us another way...In God's Kingdom, there will be no poor because poverty (and perhaps wealth) will not exist."



10) How each of us tries to personalize this passage is matter of God's leading in our own lives; it could mean a) becoming more aware of the needy in our lives already, b) committing to spending less so we can give away more, c) decoupling our idea of happiness and fulfillment from spending and stuff, d) selling some of the stuff we have so we can give the proceeds to the poor or an organization that helps the poor, e) invite others who don't the same blessings you do to share yours (your boat, your vacation home, your travel points, you name it), f) learn about poverty in America and then talk about it accurately with your friends and colleagues, or g) advocate for policies and politicians who prioritize caring for and empowering the poor.

11) Third and last, Jesus loves so He needs me to see that I am inextricably ensnared by my money and stuff, and can only be freed by God: as church historian William Placher puts it, when writing about this story in Mark 10, "Being saved from wealth is an act of God's grace."

12) St. Augustine, the great north African bishop from the 300s CE, summarizes the message of this story in Mark 10 really well in this extended citations: "Riches...are gained with toil and kept with fear. They are enjoyed with danger and lost with grief. It is hard to be saved if we have them, and impossible if we love them, and scarcely can we have them without loving them inordinately. Teach us, O Lord, this difficult lesson: to manage conscientiously the goods we possess."

### **C. Going Deeper This Week**

1) Most importantly, dedicate yourself to praying off and on repeatedly, and then reflecting on how God might want you to put into practice the warnings about wealth and stuff in Mark 10, as well as its prioritization of helping those who need with what we have.

2) Explore the spiritual discipline and commitment of living simply: [Understanding Simplicity - Richard J. Foster](#) and [Spiritual Practice of Simplicity](#) and [The Discipline of Simplicity - Discipleship Blog](#)

3) Explore the scripture this week:

- The Old Testament Mosaic has lots to say about God's desire for elimination of poverty: [Deut 15.1-11 NRSVUE](#)
- How God's people treat the poor is part of its witness as God's light in the world: [Is 58.6-9 NRSVUE](#)
- Warning to the well-off because they have deprived or defrauded the poor: [James 5.1-6 NRSVUE](#)
- From Yale University, check out an article that summarizes how the first Christians helped the poor and addressed poverty: [Early Christians and the Care of the Poor](#)

- 4) Learn more about poverty in America, and what policies help - and don't help - the poor:
- The first link is to an interview with sociologist Matthew Desmond, beginning around the 50 min. mark, on his new book on this very subject, and the second link is to the book itself: [588: Pointless Theology Fights & Rethinking American Poverty with Matthew Desmond](#) and [Poverty, by America: Desmond, Matthew](#)
  - An hour long documentary from CNBC on the squeezed middle class in America, with all the pressures and fears that come along with that: [Why Americans Feel So Poor](#)

5) On the history of America as a consumer culture: [Birth of Consumer Culture](#) and [A Brief History of Consumer Culture](#)

6) For your prayer life this week, and over the next four weeks as we focus on financial stewardship at KirkWood, here are some prayers focused on stewardship, some of which we used after yesterday's sermon: [Prayers for Stewardship - Episcopal Diocese of Washington](#)