

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable in your sight oh Lord my rock and my redeemer Amen.

So how I wonder how many of you have heard this passage of scripture before.

How many of you always get bogged down at the Camel and needle bit?

Well for me it doesn't really matter as to whether or not there was an actually Gate called the needle or Jesus was using it as a turn of phrase.

I believe that there are far more important things that we can learn from this passage and this is with regard to what Jesus says to the man. We know from this story in other gospels that this man was young and rich and he was also obedient to the Law that has been set out before him.

This young man asks Jesus the famous words "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Jesus responds with a challenge, Why do YOU call me good? No one is good but God, he then he goes on to say that the young man knows the commandments, those which were set out by Moses: The Law.

The man somewhat shocked by this says Teacher, I have kept these since my youth.

You can imagine that there may well have been the sound of righteous indignation in his voice as if to say well of course I have, I wouldn't have been a good Jew if I didn't do these things which are required of me.

Jesus then sets out another challenge to this Rich young man.

And this challenge is a difficult one,
this challenge rocks the young man to his very core.
This challenge is one that confronts the man's very identity.

Now Jesus is not doing this to be awkward,
he is not doing it to cause a problem,
the clue is in the text,

Jesus Looking at him, loved him and said,
he is doing this because he cares deeply about this
Young Mans soul.

He cares about what will stop this man getting in
the Kingdom of God.

The blockage, the stumbling block, the things that are getting in the way of the right relationship with God.

So Jesus says to the man.

You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.'

Now I don't think that Jesus is necessarily against the man having money,

but what he is against is the fact that this money, this wealth, this earthly treasure seems to be stopping the young man following him.

When I was little in the 1980's there were handrails going up the steps into my school and at break time and lunchtimes, girls and boys would get on to these handrails, swing around like gymnasts do, creating whirling shapes on the bars

and sometimes they would quite often hang upside down and look at the world from a completely different perspective for a bit.

In looking at the world downside up you saw different things and you notice what you haven't seen before.

And this is how Jesus is challenging the man to wake up, change his perspective, get out of the wealth-induced coma he has been living in,

the bubble,

the comfort blanket, the way that he looks at the world around him.

He may be living by the letter of the law in obeying the commandments set out by Moses as he has said but was he obeying the spirit, was he obeying the intent that went along with it.

Was he following through in looking after those who were poor, the widow or the orphan.

Was he practising the things he preached by following the commandments set out by Moses?

Was the money stopping him from truly fulfilling the law and the prophets? Well Jesus thinks it is

All the way through his ministry on earth Jesus constantly challenges the status quo in the world in which lived.

In the reading that immediately precedes this one, Jesus challenged the Pharisees when they were trying to trip him up on the matter of divorce by using a small child as an example, he challenged

the society of its day by using the example of a child, affording the Children an honoured place in the kingdom of God.

And this week Jesus challenges the young man in how he interacts with the world and his faith.

The young Man, however, cannot take up this challenge and walk away from Jesus with a very heavy heart.

By the world standards, it looks like this man has everything he could possibly want.

It looks like there is nothing more than he could possibly need but in the downside, up, world of Jesus Christ, this man lacks the very things that he wants – The possibility of Eternal life – The possibility of being with God in heaven forever.

In the Kingdom of God, nothing appears quite as it does on earth

The First shall be Last and the Last shall be first.

So My question to you today is how does Jesus Challenge you?

It could be through what you do with your money like the young man, but it doesn't have to be.

Time and again, Jesus goes against the normal cultural practices of the society of his day.

He eats with prostitutes and tax collectors.
He is accused of being a drunken and glutton.
He challenges the norm, upsets the status quo, all
so that he can try and explain what the Kingdom of
Heaven really means and welcome people to join
him.

So I ask again. How is Jesus Challenging you today?

The challenge that Jesus sets out before all of us, is
how can we acknowledge our faults and move
towards that day when Earth and Heaven come
together.

How can we help that to happen here on Earth not
just waiting until we get to Heaven?

We pray this challenge every time we say the prayer
that Jesus taught his disciples when they didn't
know what to pray.

That prayer, of course, is the Lords Prayer.
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as in
heaven.

Just as the Hebrew reading today says our
Christian Faith is not passive, or it should be.
It is not a faith that simply requires us to turn up to
church on a Sunday morning and forget Jesus
through the rest of the week.

The Christian faith challenges us not least because Jesus sets an example, an example of one who didn't just go with the flow but one who made a difference, one who set about turning the world upside down, one who challenged convictions about what was right and wrong

So for the last time, I am going to ask the question again, How does Jesus challenge you?

Think about it, Pray about it, but also do something about it.

Whether that is changing an attitude,

creating some space to be in a relationship with the Holy Trinity every day,

or learning how to be more of the person God wants you to be.

And if you need a helping hand to work out what it is that God is trying to tell you, I am sure there are plenty of people, here in this church who are well equipped in listening and would be delighted to help you work it out.

So as I draw to a close let's Pray.

Dear Heavenly Father,

We thank you that you sent your son to care and to

challenge,

To take the human world and turn it upside up
for your kingdom.

Help us to hear how we are to respond to HIS
challenge to our relationship with God.

And how we are to start to build your kingdom here
on earth.

We ask our prayer as ever through your son Jesus
Christ.

Amen.

