

NEW TESTAMENT



GOSPEL DOCTRINE CLASS

Lesson 17: "What Shall I Do That I May Inherit Eternal Life?" (Mark 10:17-30; 12:41-44; Luke 12:13-21; 14; 16)

- Trusting in riches can keep a person out of the kingdom of God.
- Seek heavenly, rather than earthly, treasures.
- Followers of Christ must be willing to forsake all to be true disciples.
- Seek spiritual wealth with enthusiasm and energy.

A study of this lesson will help us understand that we must be willing to sacrifice the things of this world to obtain a place in the kingdom of heaven.

Introduction

Spencer W. Kimball: *In spite of our delight in defining ourselves as modern, and our tendency to think we possess a sophistication that no people in the past ever had—in spite of these things, we are, on the whole, an idolatrous people—a condition most repugnant to the Lord.*

I am reminded of an article I read some years ago about a group of men who had gone to the jungles to capture monkeys. They tried a number of different things to catch the monkeys, including nets. But finding that the nets could injure such small creatures, they finally came upon an ingenious solution. They built a large number of small boxes, and in the top of each they bored a hole just large enough for a monkey to get his hand into. They then set these boxes out under the trees and in each one they put a nut that the monkeys were particularly fond of.

When the men left, the monkeys began to come down from the trees and examine the boxes. Finding that there were nuts to be had, they reached into the boxes to get them. But when a monkey would try to withdraw his hand with the nut, he could not get his hand out of the box because his little fist, with the nut inside, was now too large.

At about this time, the men would come out of the underbrush and converge on the monkeys. And here is the curious thing: When the monkeys saw the men coming, they would shriek and scramble about with the thought of escaping; but as easy as it would have been, they would not let go of the nut so that they could withdraw their hands from the boxes and thus escape. The men captured them easily.

And so it often seems to be with people, having such a firm grasp on things of the world—that which is temporal—that no amount of urging and no degree of emergency can persuade them to let go in favor of that which is celestial. Satan gets them in his grip easily. If we insist on spending all our time and resources building up for ourselves a worldly kingdom, that is exactly what we will inherit. (Ensign, June 1976, 5-6)

This lesson is about some things we may have to sacrifice in order to receive the greatest blessing: eternal life with our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

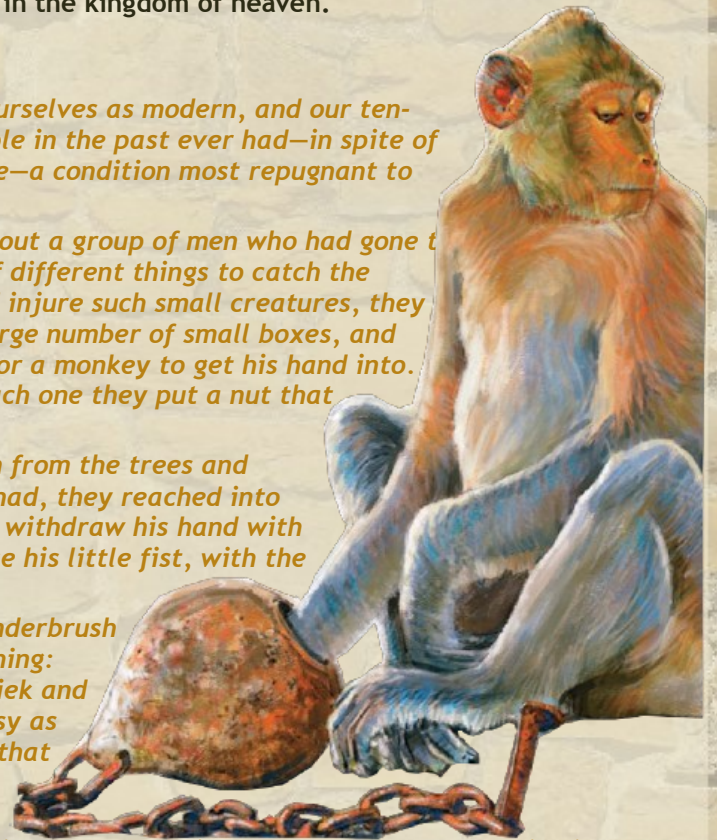
Trusting in riches can keep a person out of the kingdom of God.

(Mark 10:17-30; 12:41-44)

Mark 10:17-21 tells us what Jesus said to the rich young man who asked how to receive eternal life.

Mark 10:22 The instructions sad-

dened the young man since the Lord asked him to give up all his possessions. President Joseph F. Smith said: "*The difficulty with the young man [was that] he had*



NEXT WEEK:

#18 "He Was Lost, and Is Found" (Luke 15; Luke 17)

great possessions, and he preferred to rely upon his wealth rather than forsake all and follow Christ. ... No man can obtain the gift of eternal life unless he is willing to sacrifice all earthly things in order to obtain it” (Gospel Doctrine, 5th ed.[1939], 261).



Seek heavenly, rather than earthly, treasures. (Mark 10:17-30; 12:41-44)

Luke 12:13-15 Jesus told the man who was concerned about his inheritance that material abundance is not a worthy measure of a man’s life. He taught of the evil of covetousness. Covetousness is a strong desire for wealth or for another person’s possessions. In our society, it is easy to list things people covet today, and as we do so, we should consider the danger of coveting.

Looking at **Luke 12:15**, since we live in a world that often places great value on material possessions, think about how we can remember that our worth as individuals is not determined by how much we own. Consider the blessings that are more important than material

Mark 10:23-25 Jesus taught about the relationship between having riches and entering the kingdom of God, teaching that it is extremely hard for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Note that there is a difference between possessing riches and trusting in them. It is our challenge to maintain a proper attitude toward earthly possessions as taught in Mosiah 4:19, 21.

President Smith also taught: “*God is not a respecter of persons. The rich man may enter into the kingdom of heaven as freely as the poor, if he will bring his heart and affections into subjection to the*

law of God and to the principle of truth; if he will place his affections upon God, his heart upon the truth, and his soul upon the accomplishment of God’s purposes, and not fix his affections and his hopes upon the things of the world” (Gospel Doctrine, 260-61).

Mark 12:41-44 Contrast the rich young man with the poor widow in these verses. The widow was willing to do that which the rich young man was not willing to do. She was willing to give all she had for the kingdom of God. Consider how we can develop an attitude like the poor widow’s.

possessions, and as you do so, re-view Luke 12:31-34 and D&C 6:7 for some examples of worthy blessings.



Luke 12:16-21 The man in the parable of the rich fool had been blessed with earthly riches.

In verses 18-21, we see that his actions demonstrated that his heart was set on his riches.

In reviewing **Mosiah 4:26** and **D&C 52:40**, we see what he might have done with his abundance if he had been seeking heavenly, rather than earthly, treasures.

Many people set their hearts on worldly wealth even though they know it is only temporary, so we need to determine whether we are too concerned with material possessions, or if we have our priorities in line with gospel teachings.

Followers of Christ must be willing to forsake all to be true disciples.

(Mark 10:17-30; 12:41-44)

Interpreting the parable of the great supper, Elder James E. Talmage taught that the invited guests represented the covenant people, or house of Israel. When the servant (Jesus) asked them to come to the feast (accept the gospel), they made excuses and refused to come (Jesus the Christ, 3rd ed. [1916], 452).

Luke 14:18-21 When the Israelites made excuses and didn’t come to the feast, the Lord invited “the

poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind”—who did accept the invitation to come to the feast.

The parable of the great supper may apply to us if we make excuses for not feasting at the Lord’s table—for example, not reading the scriptures or going to the temple. Individually, we need to demonstrate our acceptance of the Lord’s invitation to the feast by making righteous use of our time and abilities.

Luke 14:26-33 Jesus taught that his disciples must be willing to sacrifice anything that he asks of them. Early disciples were asked to sacrifice their trades and professions, their traditions, their possessions, their friends, and even their families on occasion. Those same things are asked of some disciples today. Consider what the Lord has asked you to sacrifice and ponder how you have been blessed for making those sacrifices.

Seek spiritual wealth with enthusiasm and energy. (Luke 12:13-21)

Concerning the parable of the unjust steward, Elder James E. Talmage explained that the Lord used this parable “*to show the contrast between the care, thoughtfulness, and devotion of men engaged in the money-making affairs of earth, and the half hearted ways*



of many who are professedly striving after spiritual riches.” The Lord was not suggesting that we should emulate the evil practices of the unjust servant, but that we should seek spiritual wealth with the same eagerness and effort that the servant displayed in seeking material wealth.

Elder Talmage continued, “*Worldly-minded men do not neglect provision for their future years, and often are sinfully eager to amass plenty; while the ‘children of light,’ or those who believe spiritual wealth to be above all earthly possessions, are*

less energetic, prudent, or wise” (Jesus the Christ, 463).

Compare the amount of time, thought, and energy you devote to accumulating money and possessions with the amount of time, thought, and energy you devote to seeking spiritual treasures. Then ask yourself—How can I become more dedicated and enthusiastic in seeking spiritual treasures?

Conclusion

To receive eternal life, we must be willing to put away the things of the world and serve the Lord with all our heart, might, mind, and strength. Be grateful for your earthly blessings but always strive to view them in the proper perspective.

