

The absurdity of it all! Mark 10.17-31

Any guesses which pilgrim this is?

Many thanks to Rod Hill for today's TFTD.



Mark 10. 17 -31

The absurdity of it all: the rich young man



A few years ago now I saw a performance by Roly Bain, the late Clown Priest. As part of the performance he took a great big sewing needle out of his pocket and a cigarette out of the other pocket. He then proceeded to attempt to pass the cigarette through the eye of the needle – it was absolutely hilarious to watch, but perhaps not so funny to see in writing.

No matter what he did he couldn't get the cigarette to pas through the eye of the needle. Eventually, frustrated, he took the packet of cigarettes out of his pocket to put

the one in his hand back. As he did so he noticed the label on the packet. “Ah, Camels!” he exclaimed,



“No wonder it won’t go through! You can’t pass a camel through the eye of a needle.”

As a sketch it just sounds absurd, doesn’t it? But it worked as humour. It is plainly absurd even to attempt to pass a camel through the eye of a needle, but that’s precisely what Jesus is saying:

“Children, how hard it is^[b] to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.”

“How hard it is for a camel to go through the eye of a needle!” It’s absurd, but that’s the gospel isn’t it? The Gospel is patently absurd, foolish!!! Except that it isn’t.

“Who then can be saved?”

²⁷ Jesus looked at them and said, “With people this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.”

Isn’t that the very heart of the gospel? In human terms salvation is impossible. We can’t do it by ourselves. We can’t pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps to be saved. With people its absolutely impossible, but not with God.

²⁸ Then Peter spoke up, “We have left everything to follow you!”

Ah, that's it isn't it. You've just got to give up everything, just as the rich young man was instructed to do. Just give it all up to follow Jesus. "Well, that's OK then!" But it isn't as easy as that, is it?

²⁹ "Truly I tell you," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel ³⁰ will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. ³¹ But many who are first will be last, and the last first."

And with that Mark moves us on to the third time Jesus predicts his death.

It is all absurd, isn't it? Yes, but that's how the gospel works. It turns our whole value system on its head, the "first will be last, and the last first".

Oh, and then there's the stuff about money, but I'll leave you to reflect on that and the patent absurdity of it – or not!

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