

Speaking to the soul



Money

Then Jesus said to his disciples, “I tell you the truth, it is very hard for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. I’ll say it again—it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God!” Matthew 19:23-24

The disciples were deeply shocked by Jesus’ words. Jews saw wealth as a sign of God’s blessing, so they were

confused by the thought that riches could make it more difficult to enter the kingdom of heaven. They would have assumed that money made it easier to gain God's favour. We meet a number of wealthy followers of Jesus. Nicodemus is a good example, along with Joseph of Arimathea, who provided the tomb after Jesus' burial. It's also interesting to note that the first convert in Europe was Lydia, a businesswoman. Jesus wasn't saying that it was impossible for a wealthy person to enter his kingdom, but it would be extremely difficult.

The problem with wealth is that it draws so much attention to itself. Possessions need to be looked after. In an uncertain world, they are always vulnerable. Things which are valuable one moment can become valueless the next, so they need to be insured and protected, which takes time and energy. The flip side of this is that great wealth can do immense good. It can bring help, hope and happiness to people. In the right hands, there is no doubt that money can be an enormous blessing.

Jesus' words of warning need to be heard in our money-mad society in which many people assume, just like the disciples, that money is only ever a blessing. We need to listen carefully to Tertullian, the early Church Father who lived in North Africa in the second century. He wrote: "Nothing that is God's can be obtained with money." All the most wonderful and valuable things in life are free! Whether you are a multi-millionaire or wondering whether you will get through to pay day, the way to find eternal wealth is by opening your life to the Holy Spirit and allowing God to guide you.

QUESTION

Has money ever got in the way of your Christian life?

PRAYER

Lord God, help me to seek your kingdom before anything else. Amen

Photograph - near Slemish, County Antrim

