

# A Reflection For Today

HopeForNiagara.org



By: Rev. Wendy Depew Partelow

Rev. Wendy Depew Partelow is a retired pastor and serves on the American Baptist Churches of New York State Board of Missions.

## Wealth & The Kingdom of Heaven

(Text: Matthew 19:16-30)

*It will be hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven (vs. 28).*

The question is not “then, who can be saved?” The question the disciples should be asking is, “Then, what is the kingdom of heaven?”

The wealthy person approaches Jesus and asks him about eternal life - about the here after - but Jesus answers the question by talking about the kingdom of heaven - the here and now! For Jesus, the question is not about what happens to us when we die, but how are we truly going to live?



Jesus makes it clear that the kingdom of heaven is different from entering “eternal life,” different from “where we go when we die.” Indeed, the kingdom of heaven is where we *live*: in our hearts, and in our minds. The kingdom of heaven is the rest and peace we have in our souls when we do what is right and just and good: when we honor our neighbor by loving them, when we question our actions and the actions of others if life goes wrong, when we seek justice however and wherever we can, when we live into the love we saw Jesus live and love, when we follow our hearts wherever they lead and trust that God will bring us through even in the suffering, even in the anguish! The kingdom of heaven is when we do what is right and let the chips fall where they may. The kingdom of heaven is *within* us, all *around* us; it is *here and now*!

Jesus came to give us life that we may have it and live it abundantly! Jesus knew he was *right*, and that made him *righteous*! He did not question that

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love was the way to live! But he did lament that there were so many distractions to keep people from truly loving, truly living, and truly experiencing the kingdom of heaven in their midst. Jesus lamented the rich young man and the distractions he had built around himself with his wealth. Jesus let only the needs of the *people* distract him; and even in his distractions he focused only on loving. Jesus probably felt discouraged at times that there is so little true *loving* in this world.

God shows us love in abundance! God shows us that the more we sow love the more we reap love. But we want to standardize love, we want to put it in a box and give it out a little here and a little there. But GOD, God has so much love to give he squanders it: on wayward sons, on resentful children, on half-time or quarter-time workers, on unclean women and men, on pagans and thieves and murders. God knows that love can only grow through loving actions, and no one is outside the circle when it comes to God giving his love.

God's love is limited only by those who place *themselves* outside the circle of God's love, by not letting God in. God's love is limited by people not *allowing* their hearts to be changed, by not *receiving* all of the goodness of the kingdom right here in our midst!

Yes, my friends, the question is not "then who can be saved," because we all can. The question becomes, "then what is the kingdom?" That is the lifelong search for we who believe! Amen.

Image: Manuscript illumination by Master of Antwerp. Christ and the Rich Young Man, from Art in the Christian Tradition, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN. <https://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=58669>.

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