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The last few Sundays we have been reading from the 10th chapter of Mark. It begins with Jesus teaching on adultery and the place of children in the kingdom of God.

Last week it was about the rich
man who came to Jesus looking to “inherit eternal life” (v. 17). Jesus recognized him as a Jew and paraphrases the ten words God gave to the Jews. The man said he already does all these commands. One of the cruxes of this teaching is that Jesus looked at the man and loved him, so he told him that his path to eternal life is to give up all he has by selling his possessions, giving it all to the poor and then to come and follow Jesus.

About at this point most people politely close their Bible and try their best not to apply this story to their lives. Nobody wants to give all their possessions away. In fact, the man went away “grieving.”

The thing about this story is that Jesus prescribes an individual remedy for this man’s ailment. The man came, knowing he was lacking something that would assure him of his salvation. Jesus saw that his possessions owned him, so he said, in essence, get rid of what keeps you apart from God and when you are free, come and join me in the Kingdom of God, here and now.

Every time I read this I wonder what in my life is keeping me from being close to God in Jesus Christ.

What do I hold so dear in my life that I am not willing to give it up for God? Is it my possessions, my knowledge, my family, or something I don’t recognize?

I think we each hang onto something that keeps us from God and we are on a journey to give that away so we can get close to God in Jesus Christ. Christ looks at each of us and asks us to give to others something that we are hoarding, something that keeps us apart from him. This is terrifically difficult for us, in fact so difficult that Jesus says it is impossible for mortals–it is only possible for God. (v. 27)

This is one reason we journey toward God together in our churches. We need to keep reminding one another that we need to rely on God’s mercy in order to really get close to Jesus and through this to get close to one another. We support each other when we feel far off from God, when something in our lives is holding us away from God’s kingdom.

This passage reminds us that Jesus loves us and wants us to be part of his kingdom, beginning now. In order for this to happen we need to be willing to give away whatever is more important to us than our relationship with God, and give it away to help others. Only then are we freed to give ourselves completely to Jesus. And we can’t do this ourselves, we can only do it with God’s help.

May the God of possibility lead you into the kingdom and help you release whatever holds you. As you grow in Christ’s love, may the Holy Spirit enable you to share with others all God calls

you to give.