Complete Roadmap

Mark 10:17-31

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BI 171 IP Introduction to the New Testament: Gospels

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Passage: Jesus and a rich man: Mark 10:17-31 (Matthew 19:16-30)

Step 1: Beginning the Journey at Home (Reader-focused)

1. One of the aspects of my identity that connect me to this passage can be seen in the experiences of the rich man who states that he has kept the commandments that Jesus stated since he was a youth (Mark 10:20).[1] I grew up attending church and learning about the Old and New Testaments. I've attended Catholic Mass and Sunday School, Presbyterian Churches and seminary, and now attend a United Methodist Church and seminary. I have heard the teachings of Christ and try to uphold them similar to the rich man in this story, since my youth.
2. A second part of my identity that connects me to this story is my socioeconomic status. Growing up, my family did not have much- we lived in a one-bedroom house where we converted our dining room into a bedroom for my brother and I- the ideas that come from this passage about rich and poor reminds me of those days and what we experienced as a family.

Step 2: Encountering the Biblical Text (Text-focused)

- **Look for "speed bumps"—details that slow you down, demand your attention, evoke strong feelings, seem out of place or confusing—such as specific words, actions, characters, situations**
    - One of the speed bumps for me is the phrase that describes the rich man's reaction- he is grieving.[1] This is a speed bump because it causes to stall when reading the passage. Grieving is a strong reaction/response in many situations- the loss of a loved one, etc. What Greek word is used here? What is its meaning? I have read this in other translations and have seen other words utilized. What is the author trying to draw my attention to in this passage?

[1] The New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha: New Revised Standard Version. Michael D. Coogan, Marc Z. Brettler, Carol A. Newsom, and Pheme Perkins, eds. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

- A second speed bump can be found in the phrase, "eye of the needle."[1] This is a speed bump for me because it evokes confusion each time I read this passage. I have heard several interpretations of the needle that is being referenced here. What does it mean? Is this a place as some theologians and pastors have proposed or is it an actual needle?

- **State ideas that you already have about what this text means (perhaps due to previous experiences with the passage itself or due to strong opinions about the author or subject matter).**
  - From past experiences in Bible studies and several sermons that I have heard over the years, it appears that there are several meanings to this passage. One meaning that I have heard in sermons on a Sunday morning include Jesus is explaining that those who have much and who have a difficult time with letting go of worldly possessions for the sake of Christ will have a difficult time following Jesus.

- **What do you hope to learn more about? Where does this text raise questions for you?**
  - This passage evokes a multitude of questions when I read over it. Below are several of them:
    - Why does the man call him, "Good teacher"?[1]
      - What does he know about Jesus that others did not know?
    - Jesus names 7 of the Ten Commandments- why these specific seven?
    - Grieving is a very specific emotion/reaction- what does the word mean in the original text? I've heard several different words from different translations
    - What does Jesus mean when he says, "eye of a needle"[1]
      - Is this a real needle or something else?
    - Does Jesus mean a follower of Christ must give up everything literally or is there a deeper/metaphorical meaning here?

Step 3: Close Reading of the Text

Translation Comparison of Three Translations

New American Standard Bible (NASB)[2]	New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) [3]	Common English Bible (CEB)[4]
17 As He was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do so that I may inherit eternal life?" 18 But Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone. 19 You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not give false testimony, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.'" 20 And he said to Him, "Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth." 21 Looking at him, Jesus showed love to him and said to him, "One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." 22 But he [a]was deeply dismayed by [b]these words, and he went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property. 23 And Jesus, looking around, *said to His disciples, "How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!" 24 And the disciples were amazed at His	17 As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 18 Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. 19 You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness. You shall not defraud. Honor your father and mother.' " 20 He said to him, "Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth." 21 Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money[a] to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." 22 When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions. 23 Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" 24 And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how	17 As Jesus continued down the road, a man ran up, knelt before him, and asked, "Good Teacher, what must I do to obtain eternal life?" 18 Jesus replied, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except the one God. 19 You know the commandments: *Don't commit murder. Don't commit adultery. Don't steal. Don't give false testimony.* Don't cheat. *Honor your father and mother."*[a] 20 "Teacher," he responded, "I've kept all of these things since I was a boy." 21 Jesus looked at him carefully and loved him. He said, "You are lacking one thing. Go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor. Then you will have treasure in heaven. And come, follow me." 22 But the man was dismayed at this statement and went away saddened, because he had many possessions. 23 Looking around, Jesus said to his disciples, "It will be very hard for the wealthy to enter God's kingdom!" 24 His words startled the disciples, so Jesus told them again, "Children, it's difficult to

[2] The Holy Bible: New American Standard Bible. La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995.
[3] The New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha: New Revised Standard Version. Michael D. Coogan, Marc Z. Brettler, Carol A. Newsom, and Pheme Perkins, eds. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.
[4] The Common English Bible. Nashville: Common English Bible, 2011.

words But Jesus responded again and *said to them, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! 25 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.” 26 And they were even more astonished, and said to Him, “[c]Then who can be saved?” 27 Looking at them, Jesus *said, “With people it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God.” 28 Peter began to say to Him, “Behold, we have left everything and have followed You.” 29 Jesus said, “Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel’s sake, 30 [d]but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in [e]the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life. 31 But many *who are* first will be last, and the last, first.”	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.” 26 They were greatly astounded and said to one another,[c] “Then who can be saved?” 27 Jesus looked at them and said, “For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible.” 28 Peter began to say to him, “Look, we have left everything and followed you.” 29 Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for my sake and for the sake of the good news[d] 30 who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. 31 But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.”	enter God’s kingdom! 25 It’s easier for a camel to squeeze through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter God’s kingdom.” 26 They were shocked even more and said to each other, “Then who can be saved?” 27 Jesus looked at them carefully and said, “It’s impossible with human beings, but not with God. All things are possible for God.” 28 Peter said to him, “Look, we’ve left everything and followed you.” 29 Jesus said, “I assure you that anyone who has left house, brothers, sisters, mother, father, children, or farms because of me and because of the good news 30 will receive one hundred times as much now in this life—houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children, and farms (with harassment)—and in the coming age, eternal life. 31 But many who are first will be last. And many who are last will be first.”

Translation Comparison Analysis

Each of the translations starts out with similar wording and ends with similar phrases; however, there are a lot of words and phrases that are different amongst the NASB, NRSV, and CEB versions. They each state the Ten Commandments in verse 19, but each of them starts with a different phrase. The NASB says, “Do not” at the start of the commandments. The NRSV uses the words, “You shall not” and the CEB says, “Don’t.” Jesus’s reaction in verse 21 towards the

man is similar, but again different phrases are utilized. In the NASB Jesus "shows love to him" while the NRSV says that Jesus "looking at him, loved him." The CEB uses an additional word in its description. It says that Jesus "looked at him carefully and loved him." In verse 22, the man is "dismayed" in the NASB and the CEB, but he was "shocked" in the NRSV. Later in that same verse, the NRSV and the NASB state that the man went away "grieving" while the CEB states that he went away saddened.

There are two instances where each of the translations describe the reactions of the disciples with varying words. First, in verse 24, the disciples were "amazed" in the NASB, "perplexed" in the NRSV and "startled" in the CEB. The second instance where the disciple's reaction is described is in verse 26 where the translations state that the disciples were "even more astonished" in the NASB, "greatly astounded" in the NRSV, and "shocked even more" in the CEB.

Outline or Summary with analysis

- Jesus and the rich man (**Mark 10:17-31)**
    - Jesus is going on a journey when stopped by a man (Mark 10:17)
    - The man asks a question (Mark 10:17)
        - Man calls him "Good teacher" and asks how to obtain eternal life
    - Jesus responds (Mark 10:18-19)
        - Asks why the man calls him "good"
        - Jesus tells him to follow several commandments
    - The man responds a first time (Mark 10:20)
        - The man says that he has kept those commandments
    - Jesus responds again (Mark 10:21)
        - Jesus looks at the man
        - Jesus tells him to sell his belongings and follow him
    - The man responds again (Mark 10:22)
        - Overcome with shock, he leaves grieving
    - Jesus responds to the disciples (Mark 10:23)
        - It is difficult to get into heaven for those with wealth
    - The disciples respond (Mark 10:24)
        - The disciples are perplexed
    - Jesus responds again (Mark 10:24-25)

        - Camel analogy
    - Disciples respond again (Mark 10:26)
        - How is someone saved?
    - Jesus responds a third time (Mark 10:27)
        - Jesus states that with God all things are possible
    - The disciples last response (Mark 10:28)
        - Peter states they left their belongings and followed Jesus
    - Jesus's last response (Mark 10: 29-31)
        - Jesus explains that no one has left their house or family for the sake of the good news who will not also receive in the present persecutions
        - They will receive eternal life in the next life
        - The first will be last and the last will be first

Analysis of Outline:

When reviewing the outline, it becomes evident that Jesus is using the conversation with the rich man as a teaching moment. Jesus, as the teacher provides opportunities for questions and gives answers to those questions. When his disciples are confused, he provides clarity and further information. It appears that there is a pattern between Jesus and the rich man and then the disciples. First, there is a conversation of Jesus responding to the rich man before conversation pivots to Jesus's teaching and the disciples responding. At the end, Jesus has the final word on the topic with a fuller explanation.

Eight Key Words with explanations

1. *Good*- Jesus calls the man out for describing him as "good." Why the emphasis?
2. *Inherit*- in the three translations, two of them used the phrase "inherit" while the CEB uses the word obtain.
3. *Eternal life*- this is the what the entire narrative is about- it is central to the conversations that Jesus has with the man as well as his disciples
4. *Loved*- Jesus has a reaction towards the man; what does it mean for Jesus to shoe love towards the man, what did this look like?
5. *Shocked*- the CEB and NASB use the word "dismay" while the NRSVue says "shocked." What is the Greek word?
6. *Grieving*- The NASB and the NRSVue use the word "grieving" while the CEB says that the man was "saddened"
7. *Perplexed*- each of the translations use a different word here- amazed, perplexed, and startled. What is the Greek word here? What is trying to be conveyed? Each word evokes different ideas of what the response may look like.
8. *Astounded*- another instance where the three translations differ on word choices, again with the disciples' reactions- NRSVue uses "astounded" while the NASB says they were

astonished and the CEB says they were shocked. What does the writer want us to know about their reaction?

Concordance Work for one key word, using Greek
Section 3
Original Grade 18/20
I am editing this section to more accurately describe the word that I selected and the conclusion that I arrived at from the concordance work.

When looking at the text, Mark 10:26 features a word that has been translated into several different words. In the NASB, the disciples are "astonished" while in the NRSVue, they are "astounded".[2,3] The CEB says that the disciples were "shocked."[4] Each of them has similar, but differing definitions in English.

In the Strong's Concordance, the Strong's number is G1605.[5] The Greek word is **ἐκπλήσσω** or ***ekplēssō*** which means, "to be struck with amazement, astonished, amazed."[5] Strong's also states that the definition is, "to be astonished", prop. to be struck with terror, of a sudden and startling alarm; but like our "astonish" in popular use, often employed on comparatively slight occasions."[5]

This phrase is utilized in the Bible 13 times- all within Matthew, Mark, Luke and Acts. It is not seen anywhere else in the New Testament. When looking at where this word is used elsewhere within the Gospel of Mark, it is seen in Mark 1:22, Mark 6:2, Mark 7:37, Mark 10:26, and Mark 11:18. Three of the times it is used (Mark 1:22, Mark 6:2, Mark 11:18), the word is referencing an audience's reactions to Jesus's teaching. They are "amazed" and "astonished" at his teachings.[2] In Mark 10:26, Jesus is teaching, and the disciples are "astonished" and ask, "who can be saved." The word in Mark 7:37 also refers to the audience's reaction but is related to the healings and miracles that Jesus performs.[2]

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[5] Blue Letter Bible (2021). "G1605 - ekplēssō - Strong's Greek Lexicon (nasb20)." Retrieved from https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g1605/nasb20/mgnt/41-1/#lexResults. October 15, 2024.

It becomes increasingly clear through this search that the word being utilized is pointing out an emotion/reaction that would be considered "both" not "either or." The disciples were both in amazement and shocked. They were in amazement and astonished with what Jesus was teaching, but also shocked- possibly because the disciples' thought was correct about their beliefs and standards surrounding wealth were accurate, but Jesus is teaching something different.

Step 4: Reading Contextually
Gospel Comparison (only Matthew and Mark)

1. Literary Context

In the Gospel of Mark, the story of the rich man falls within a portion of the text where Jesus is teaching. Prior to this, the text says that Jesus is teaching in Judea where he discusses divorce and blesses the children. Following the children, the rich man runs up to talk with Jesus. After the conversation with the rich man and the disciples, Jesus tells of his death a third time, there is a request from James and John and then a healing of Bartimaeus who is blind.

When examining the Gospel of Matthew, the text also narrates that Jesus is in Judea where he similarly teaches about divorce and blesses the children. After Jesus blesses the children, similarly to Mark, the Gospel of Matthew also details the exchange between the rich man and Jesus, then the conversation between Jesus and the disciples.

They are also similar in how the narrative of the story about the rich man is presented and the exchange between the rich man and Jesus. The outline is nearly identical- a rich man asks how to inherit eternal life, Jesus responds with the commandments the rich man should keep, the rich man responds that he has kept them since he was young, and then Jesus tells him to sell all that he has and give to the poor. Both texts end with the rich man going away grieving.

The following exchange between the disciples is very similar as well. Jesus tells them it is difficult for those who are rich to enter the kingdom of God. The disciples are "perplexed" in both stories and Jesus gives the same example of the camel going through the eye of a needle. The disciples ask, "who can be saved" and Jesus states, "For mortals it is impossible, but for God all things are possible."[1] In both Gospels, the entire block about the rich man ends with that statement from Jesus that, "many who are first will be last, and the last will be first."[1]

2. Gospel Differences

There are several differences that can be seen between the Gospel of Mark's version of this teaching exchange between Jesus, the rich man and the disciples and the version in the Gospel of Matthew. The first major difference can be seen in Mark 10:19 and Matthew 19:18-19.

Mark 10:19[1]	**Matthew 19:18-19[1]**
You shall not murder	You shall not murder
You shall not commit adultery	You shall not commit adultery
You shall not steal	You shall not steal
You shall not bear false witness	You shall not bear false witness
You shall not defraud	**Honor your father and mother**
Honor your father and mother	**Also, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.**

When Jesus recites the commandments that the rich man should keep to inherit eternal life, the first four are the same. There are two differences amongst the last two. In Mark, the fifth commandment is, "You shall not defraud" while in Matthew, the fifth one is "Honor your father and mother." Matthew does not mention the commandment to not defraud. Mark does include the commandment of honoring father and mother, but it is the last commandment that Jesus states in that Gospel. In the Gospel of Matthew, instead of the commandment to honor father and mother being the last one, Matthew makes it the fifth one and closes with "Also, you shall love your neighbor as yourself."[1]

Another difference can be seen in the last four verses of Matthew. Both Mark and Matthew have Peter saying, "Look, we have left everything and followed you."[1] What comes after this statement differs- in Matthew 19:27, Peter says "What then will we have" to which Jesus talks about "at the renewal of all things"[1] and Jesus is seated on his throne, those of the disciples who followed him will also sit on thrones and judge the tribes of Israel.[1] Mark does not have Peter or Jesus say either of those statements. They both do close with the same statements surrounding leaving possessions and family for Christ will receive "a hundredfold", but Matthew states that those who do that will inherit eternal life while Mark states that in this life, they will receive persecutions.

3. How does the ways that your passage is unique illustrate something about your "home" Gospel's broader theological themes?

A. Significance of literary context:

Literary context is crucial because it helps the reader and audience, both past and present, understand the author's intended meanings. As stated previously, both in the Gospel of Mark and Matthew, the story about the rich man is placed in a similar location. In both passages, this story is found in a block of Jesus teaching the crowds and the disciples, with a focus on the disciples. This is of literary significance because throughout the gospels, Jesus is found to be in various roles- healer, Messiah, exorcist, and teacher to name a few. In this block of narrative, the author of this Gospel is emphasizing the role of Jesus as teacher. The narratives that are featured prior to this passage in both Gospels show Jesus is teaching his disciples about various important topics. He utilizes conversations between himself and others as teachable moments; specifically, here it is the conversation between Jesus and the rich man. The meaning and emphasis here is that Jesus is teaching and specifically, teaching them about what it means to be a disciple.

B. Significance of passage for Gospel's theology:

One way to characterize the main thrust of the Gospel of Mark is through the lens of Jesus as the Messiah. To emphasize this lens, the main focus of Mark 10: 17-31 surrounds the question proposed by the rich man, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"[1] The concept of eternal life and accessing it is at the heart and very center of what it means that Jesus is the Messiah. In order to have eternal life, Jesus tells the rich man that he needs to follow the commandments and to sell all his belongings, give to the poor, and most importantly- follow him. In order to have eternal life, believers must follow the Messiah and that is what the author is trying to communicate in the story of the rich man as well as the teaching discussion between Jesus and the disciples.

C. Significance of the canonical context:

The story of the rich man is found in both the Gospels of Matthew and Mark and while they both have similar details, they differ in a way that excluding one would remove the reader/audience from seeing different roles, perspectives, and characteristics of Christ. As stated previously, one of the theological perspectives of the Gospel of Mark is Jesus as the Messiah. This passage helps to point the reader/audience to the understanding that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah and by following him, a person can obtain eternal life.

When looking at the differences between Mark and Matthew, it is easier to see in the Gospel of Matthew how Jesus is revealed to us as Emmanuel or God with us.[6] For example, when Jesus recites the commandments that the rich man must follow, he adds at the end that he must, "Also, you shall love your neighbor as yourself."[1] Here, the Gospel of Matthew is drawing from Leviticus 19[1] which is where God is speaking to Moses. By adding this command to his

[6] Dr. Laura Sweat Holmes, "Module Two: Matthew, Week 2," (lecture, Wesley Theological Seminary, 17 September 2024).

version of the narrative, Matthew is drawing the connection between the God of the Jewish scripture to Jesus as Emmanuel and as the son of God.

Omitting one of these versions of the narrative takes away from the respective gospel that it is included in. Both the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Mark need to have their distinct narratives included in their respective Gospel because as stated previously, they point to different roles, perspectives, and characteristics of Christ. The deletion of the narrative from one or the other would not emphasize these characteristics more clearly if it was removed.

Preliminary Conclusion: What have you learned so far?

Each Gospel provides a different lens in which the reader/audience can see different roles, perspectives, and characteristics of Jesus. The story of the rich man in the Gospel of Mark highlights several roles that Jesus showcases throughout his ministry on earth. This narrative shows Jesus as a teacher on how to obtain eternal life as well as what it means to be his disciple. In three different English translations of the Bible, several words are translated in different ways that highlight different reactions by several people in the story, for example, the rich man going away saddened or grieving or the disciples being astonished or shocked. When exploring these terms, it becomes clearer that the reactions are both/and not either/or.

While Mark 10:17-31 is fourteen verses, it is packed with details, information, and insight that may or may not be seen in an initial or leisurely reading of the text. One area that I would like to explore more is what does Jesus say additionally in the Gospel of Mark about eternal life. The story of the rich man highlights one component of eternal life- specifically some actions that followers of Christ take externally- selling possessions and giving to the poor. Is there more to this? We see in other Gospels that Jesus says one must believe in him to obtain

eternal life. That is not mentioned here. I would like to explore further what Jesus says about eternal life and how to obtain it that includes both internal and external actions.

Roadmap Step 4, continued: Reading Contextually
Step 4B: Considering the Literary Context

1. **Consider the genre (2 paragraphs, one for each step).**
    a. **In what type of work is the passage found? (A letter? A Gospel?) How does this information help illuminate the passage? (Consider reviewing the lecture on genre!) Remember what Gospel genre means. How does that matter for your passage?**

Genres are important to each story and work of literature because they establish a baseline of expectations that are met when reading. The story of the rich man found in Mark 10:17-31 is found within the Gospel of Mark. According to Powell, gospels are loosely associated with the category of ancient biography[7]. This type of genre was commonly used in and around Jesus's earthly ministry and within the Roman empire. Some of the characteristics of this genre are that there is no concern for establishing facts, historical data is not a focus, the chronology of events is not important, there is a focus on the character of the person that the biography is about, and there is a focus on the identified person's death and how that relates to their "philosophy of life."[7] The ancient biography is supposed to be more formative and less informative like today's biographies. They are shaped by author and communal beliefs and focuses on the significance for its respective audiences.[7]

Genres create expectations for a reader and a reader anticipates the various aspects of a particular genre. When reading and listening to a Gospel, the audience expects to learn about the identified person's life and their character. The Gospel of Mark tells the story of Jesus's life and teachings through the genre of an ancient biography and the story about the rich man is one example of a story about Jesus's life, his interactions with people, and his ability to use a situation as a means to teach those around him, his disciples, and the audiences of the text both in

[7] Mark Allen Powell, Introducing the New Testament: An Historical, Literary, and Theological Survey (2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018)

the first century and up through to the present. Knowing that the story is found in a Gospel helps to illuminate the different meanings of the story- the historical, literary, and theological, and social contexts.

Not only is it important to note that gospels are an ancient biography, but it is also important to note that the word "gospel" is also crucial to the understand of this type of ancient biography. The word "gospel" means "Good news" and refers to the content of the gospels and what the authors are trying to share- the good news of the life of Jesus Christ and what his life means. Powell states that "Gospels are only a short step removed from preaching."[7] As it relates to Mark 10: 17-31, there are several statements that Jesus states that can be considered "good news" to both the first century and 21st century audiences. One of them can be found in Mark 10:27. After Jesus is asked who is able to be saved, Jesus responds by saying, "For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible" (Mark 10:27). Jesus is pointing out that through human efforts/work, it is impossible to enter the kingdom of heaven, but with Go, it is possible.

b. What genre is the passage itself? (A narrative? Discourse? Parable? Prayer? Poem? Doxology? See the section in Powell, in Ch. 5 titled "Gospels," where he lists the different genres, you're likely to find in the Gospels.) How does knowing the genre(s) help you interpret the passage?

As stated previously, genres are important to each story and work of literature because they establish a baseline of expectations that are met when reading. While the Gospel of Mark is based on the genre of an ancient biography, throughout the gospels, there are a variety of subgenres. The story of the rich man is similar to the subgenre of what Powell describes as a Pronouncement Story. In this subgenre, "everything leads up to a climatic and provocative pronouncement: the saying, which usually comes at the end, is the whole point of the anecdote."[7]

These types of stories were frequently shared during the time of Jesus's ministry and were found in many other stories about historical figures.[7] What is important as it relates to this story and many other pronouncement stories in the New Testament Gospels is that it "preserves the memory of something Jesus said."[7] In the story of the rich man, Jesus is being asked what the rich man can do to obtain eternal life. Jesus responds by indicating that the man should follow the commandments. Once the many indicates that he has done those things, Jesus tells him that he then should sell all that he owns and give it to the poor. There may be several statements that are being preserved in this story. Frist, it could be when Jesus says, "How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!"[8] The second statement could be, "For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible." (Mark 10:27). The last saying that is likely being preserved is the final verse of the passage where Jesus states, "But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first." (Mark 10:31).

Knowing that this is a pronouncement story helps to illuminate this passage in a different light. While focusing on what Jesus states is important when reading the gospels overall, when a story is presented through the subgenre of a pronouncement story, it requires the reader to take additional notice and further scrutiny of what is being said. The point of a pronouncement story is preserving the statements; therefore, when this genre is used- there is an additional emphasis on what Jesus is saying. The Markan author is telling the reader, "Do not miss this! This statement that Jesus is saying is important!" It is the figurative underline and bold print of the story. Typically, when Jesus makes a pronouncement, the author is trying to use Jesus's statements to teach the audience a truth or something about Jesus's character, or something about

[8] [8]The New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha: New Revised Standard Version. Michael D. Coogan, Marc Z. Brettler, Carol A. Newsom, and Pheme Perkins, eds. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

the kingdom of heaven.

2. **Describe how your passage fits into the broader narrative of the Gospel (2 paragraphs). For your Gospel comparison, you looked at the immediate literary context of your passage – what was right before and right after. Now, review the structure of the Gospel that we've described (as in, look back at how we talked about the structure of that Gospel in class). Where does your passage fit in that broader structure of the Gospel? How does that placement matter for the interpretation of your passage?**

The Gospel of Mark is split into two distinct sections. Both sections open with a on the identity of Jesus as seen in Mark 1:1,21-28 and Mark 8:27-30.[7] The first part, Mark 1:1-8:21 is categorized as the public ministry of Jesus while Mark 8:22-16:20 is identified as Jesus's private ministry where he is teaching the disciples "along the way/road." Both the public ministry section and the private ministry sections also include God's voice identifying Jesus is also found at the beginning of each section.[7]

The story of the rich Man fits into the private ministry of Jesus where he is teaching the disciples various principals because first, the passage it's in Mark 10 which fits within that category. It also fits into that category because as is stated in Mark 10:17, "As he was setting out in a journey…" it is clear that Jesus and the disciples were going somewhere when the rich man came up to ask Jesus a question. Jesus then takes this as an opportunity to not only teach the rich man, but also his disciples about an aspect of the kingdom of God and how to enter into that kingdom.

The placement of this story matters to the interpretation of the passage because as stated previously, Jesus is trying to teach the disciples about the truths of God's kingdom. He is doing this in a private setting to ensure that they get what he is saying- it appears that Jesus doesn't want them to miss the point of what he is telling them. Similar to the reason that it's important

that the story of the rich man is a pronouncement story, it is included in the private ministry portion of the Gospel of Mark because the author wants the reader to know that this is important- these are important things the author wants the audience to remember and the audience should take notice just as the disciples do.

Step 4C: Considering the historical, social, cultural, and canonical contexts
Goal: Consider how the text's social, historical, and political environments illuminate this passage. In doing so, consider the following:

1. **What are the life circumstances presented in this passage? (For example, do any of the characters hold positions of authority? Are any impoverished? How do you see this in the passage—in other words, don't assume things, but pay attention to the details that the author gives you.) (1 paragraph)**

In the story of the rich man and Jesus, the main characters featured are initially the rich man who makes an inquiry to Jesus. Later in the text, the disciples also appear when Jesus turns to them and discusses the meaning of what he has said to the rich man. Peter is the final character that is mentioned specifically when he also makes an inquiry to Jesus. In this story, the rich man holds a position of authority by virtue of his money. Since the rich man states that he has kept the commandments since his youth, it can be inferred that he is Jewish. While the text itself never states directly that the man in the story is a "rich man" as the section is titled in the NRSV, the man's wealth is inferred based upon the fact that when told to sell all of his things and give to the poor, the man walks away "grieving" because he had a lot of possessions. It is state in other Gospels that the man is not only rich, but also young and a ruler in another; however, for Mark's version, the only details are that the person asking about Jesus how to obtain eternal life is a man, and that at the end of Jesus's interactions with him, he had a lot of possessions.

2. **Are there terms, ideas, or customs mentioned in the passage that require further research? Your focus here should be on the historical-social context. In other words, what do you need to know about the text's ancient context to help you interpret this passage (like customs, vocabulary, social etiquette). Identify ideas or questions that need to be researched (for Step 5). These are usually ideas that the Gospel author would assume that the audience would know and that wouldn't have to be explained, but that could be unfamiliar to you. Do NOT provide answers. Ask questions. (1 paragraph)**

One of the customs that requires further research from this passage is related to wealth and honor. What were the customs of the wealthy? How does a person acquire wealth during this time? Since Jesus is saying that it is difficult for the rich to enter the kingdom of God, what conventions of that time is Jesus's overturning? What were the views of the wealthy during the Roman empire? Throughout this story Jesus alludes to and directly states at the end, the first will be last and the last will be first- what would this phrase mean to a first century Roman citizen and/or Jewish person? Is there a specific cultural reference?

Roadmap Step 5: Engaging the Text, Other Readers, and Our Communities
Goal 5a: To refine and broaden what you've learned so far by listening to other interpretations of the passage in order to be able to establish an interpretation of the passage and describe its implications for your community.

1. **Class texts: What do Powell and True to Our Native Land or The Global Bible Commentary or The Women's Bible Commentary have to say about your passage?**

In True to Our Native Land, the author expresses that the question proposed by the rich man on how to inherit eternal life "confronts directly the relationship between financial status and following Jesus."[9] The author goes on to state that wealth is not at the heart of the issue in this story, but rather the desire to maintain one's wealth is the primary focus and problem being addressed. According to True to Our Native Land, Jesus does not overlook the concerns related to economic justice, but rather emphasizes it by expressing that the redistribution of possessions and wealth to those who are marginalized is a sign of "one's commitment to God's reign in the world."[9] Powell states that one of the "radical ideals" of Christ can be summed up as, "those who trust in God to rule their lives should have no trouble divesting themselves of material possessions."[7]

2. **Bible Dictionaries and Encyclopedias: Choose one from the following list. Look up one article that sheds light on your passage. For example, if you have a question (from Step 4) about the agriculture, you might look up an article about farming practices. Sometimes it takes some thought to fit your language into the categories the dictionaries use. Be patient. After reading the article, summarize what you have learned that is important to know for your passage.**
    a. **The Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels (eBook available at link)**

The relationship between the rich and the poor is a topic that is referenced often in the New Testament. Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels notes that according to multiple scholars, "the kingdom of God was good news particularly to the poor and oppressed because it signaled the

[9] Brian Blount, et. al, True to Our Native Land: An African American Biblical Commentary (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007)

end of their sufferings" and that in addition to the poor, Jesus provided an important place in his ministry for those who had been marginalized by society.[10] Jesus encouraged people to prepare for the redemption of Israel by practicing justice and mercy.[10]

In the Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, it is noted that specifically in the Gospel of Mark, the author often highlights the hostility that Jesus has towards wealth and that this hostility is brought into focus in the story of the rich man found in Mark 10: 17-31. In this story, "Mark shows that great wealth so binds its "possessor" that is becomes impossible for the affluent to attain eternal life."[10] There is a great emphasis on the point that those who have many possessions and great wealth should get rid of them for "the sake of eternal life."[10] The author goes on to state that while there can be extremely dangerous and harmful consequences for persons who leave behind all their possessions and families, Jesus states that if they do give up those things, their needs will be provided for and met. Compared to the other gospels, those who are identified as "the poor" do not play a major part in the Gospel of Mark's "ethical agenda" and narrative that the Markan author presents.

3. **Choose two commentaries from this list from Wesley's library and read what they have to say about your passage.**
    a. **On Mark**
        i. **Lamar Williamson, Jr. Mark: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (2009)**
        ii. **Alan Culpepper, Mark. Smith & Helwys (2007)**

Mark 10: 17: "As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?""[3]

One of the questions that I asked previously was surrounding customs and practices of those who were classified as rich. According to Culpepper, "It was considered undignified or

[10] Green, Joel B., Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicholas Perrin, eds. 2013. *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. 2nd edition. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press. http://site.ebrary.com/id/10833490.

shameful for a man to run (pulling up his robe, exposing his legs, sandals flapping) except in an emergency."[11] This provided additional context about why the man's actions are documented and communicated to the audience. One new perspective that I learned came from Culpepper's analysis of the rich man's question that he asked in Mark 10:17. When the rich man asks the question, "What must I do" it "assumes that by doing something he can gain eternal life." Culpepper also states that the word "inherit," is "loaded with connotations deeply rooted in Scripture."[11] Williamson also points out another significant point about the word "inherit" which also not only has importance in scripture, but also culturally, because "the verb "inherit" would come naturally to the lips of a man of wealth."[12] Williamson points out that similar to an her that is receiving an inheritance, they "must meet certain conditions and fulfill certain obligations."[12] According to both authors, inheriting is something that a person does, it is action oriented on the part of the rich man.

Mark 10:19: "You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother"[3]

Here, Jesus begins to build on the theme of obtaining eternal life. Jesus's point is going to be the opposite of what the rich man expects. Jesus starts out with what is expected- following the commandments. Culpepper states that, "eternal life lies not in doing, not in keeping commandments, but in complete abandonment of oneself to faith in God."11 While Jesus starts out with discussing the commandments, Jesus's focus will shift from the commandments to discussing it is not in the "doing" that one obtains eternal life, but rather as Culpepper states,

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[11] Culpepper, R. Alan. *Mark*. Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Pub., 2007.
[12] Williamson, Lamar. *Mark: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*. Louisville: Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, 2009. https://public.ebookcentral.proquest.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=5974022.

"The kingdom must be received as a gift from God. Jesus' recitation of the commandments is not his definitive answer but rather a further test of the man's understanding."[11] Williamson also points out that there is a testing of the rich man. Williamson writes that "Jesus is testing the man's sincerity… The man's life-long observance of these commandments assures Jesus of his sincerity, so that Jesus "looking upon him loved him."[12]

Mark 10:21: "Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."[3]

Both Williamson and Culpepper point out that it is the man's sincerity "to which Jesus is drawn" and as a result of his sincerity, Jesus "loved him." They both point out that "[t]his is the only person in the Gospel of Mark whom Jesus is said to love."[11,12] After reading these two statements about Jesus's love for the rich man and how it is the only person that it is said Jesus loved, I was curious as to why, but Culpepper points out that the note about Jesus's love for the rich man is crucial because "it means that the radical demand that follows flows from Jesus' love; it is in no way meant to discourage the man or turn him away. It is not a test; it is what the man needs to do in order to inherit eternal life."[11]

Both Culpepper and Williamson pick up on the five verbs or imperatives found in Jesus's response: "It consists of a series of five imperatives which fall on the man's ears like hammer blows: go, sell, give, come, follow."[12] Culpepper says that these five verbs/imperatives are to be taken as a singular act, "Go, sell what you have, give to the poor, and come, follow me. Jesus' invitations to discipleship are tailored to each individual's needs."

Both Williamson and Culpepper point out that in order for the rich man of Mark 10 to inherit eternal life, he was to "follow Jesus on the way to the cross"[12], which required the

"disposal"[12] and "divesting"[11] of his wealth and possessions. This disposal and divesting for the rich man was "a prerequisite to discipleship"[11] for him.

Mark 10:22: When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

Both Williamson and Culpepper emphasize the man's reaction to Jesus's command to sell everything, give to the poor and follow him. Culpepper points out that the man's shocked and grieved response, "stands in dramatic contrast to his extravagant approach to Jesus (v. 17). Whereas he had come on the scene running, kneeling before Jesus, and hailing him, he left shaken and grieving." [11] In contrast to the rich man's shocked and grieved response, Williamson points out that the disciples have a different reaction. He states that disciple's reaction "was first amazement and then utter astonishment... Traditionally, wealth was a sign of the blessing of God. That Jesus viewed it as a hindrance to entering the Kingdom of God was amazing." [12] Culpepper also notes that the audience is not aware of the man's material wealth until the very end of the story which was intentional because it causes "the reader to replay the entire scene with this new information in mind." [11]

Mark 10:23: "Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!"[3]

In this verse, the Markan author shows Jesus moving from a "specific case (the rich man) to a generalization about all who have riches."[12] Here, Jesus pivots from talking to the rich man to speaking and teaching to his disciples, which is one of the themes of the second section of Mark. According to Culpepper, "Jesus drives home the point of the danger that wealth poses for discipleship."[11] Williamson points out that having riches and being wealthy during this time were blessing from God and that similar to other expectations of the time, Jesus's views were the

opposite. It was amazing to the disciples that "Jesus viewed it[wealth] as a hindrance to entering the Kingdom of God."[12] By using the analogies that it is difficult to enter the kingdom of God, "the disciples were "exceedingly astonished"" because even though they were not considered to be rich, "they belonged to a culture whose evaluation of wealth was fundamentally challenged by the teaching of Jesus. They were profoundly shaken."[12]

Mark 10: 24-27: [24] The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, "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." [26] The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, "Who then can be saved?"
[27] Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God."[3]

Jesus has gone from the specifics of the rich man to "even broader generalization that embraces everyone" as seen in verse 24.[12] According to Williamson, the analogy about the camel going through the eye of the needle, "reverts to a consideration of the rich as a class, while the final generalization (v. 27) again applies to everyone."[12] Culpepper notes similarly that there is a broad generalization that applies to all people in Mark 10:24-27. "Salvation is not a matter of human virtue or effort; it is solely and entirely a gift of God's grace."[11] He goes on to state that "[e]ntering the kingdom, inheriting eternal life, or gaining salvation is therefore a paradoxical matter. It requires abandoning all pretense and proof of one's virtue… It is entirely a matter of God's goodness, a free gift from God. But there is hope—God can save even people like us."[11] This hope can be also seen in verse 27 where Williamson points out that, "When the disciples ask who then can be saved, Jesus affirms that for human beings it is impossible, but "for God all things are possible""[3]

MARK 10: 28-31: "[28] Then Peter spoke up, "We have left everything to follow you!"
[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."[3]

In Mark 10:28-31, it starts off with Peter who seemingly is acting as the spokesperson for the disciples, seeks additional "reassurance for those who in response to Jesus' call have abandoned all the old supports."[12] Here, Christ does not scold Peter and the disciples for being insecure, but rather addresses these concerns by making what appears to be a promise and a reminder of what discipleship means. According to Williamson, this "brief saying about first and last which appears in various contexts in the Synoptic Gospels" and aptly summarizes the lesson of the passage and the section of scripture, specifically, Mark 9:30—10:45.[12] Culpepper agrees and points out that this "free-floating saying gathers up the theme of most of this chapter."[11] Those deemed to be first in this passage, are the rich man and those like him, who "rely on the security of their possessions" while the last are people like, "those who sacrifice all for Jesus and the good news (10:28-30) will be first."[11]

Step 4B Question 3 Conclusion
Conclude this section by going back to Step 1-2 and considering the questions you had about this passage. What questions were answered? What are you still curious about (identify at least one thing)? What is one thing from your research that has deeply resonated with you about this passage?

In Step 2, one of the questions that I had surrounded the Rich Man's responses of going away grieving. The other question I had was about the phrase, "eye of the needle." One of the interesting and striking observations that was revealed in completing the commentary work is that both of these statements- the rich man going away grieving and the statement about the "eye of the needle" can be viewed as being related and/or connected with each other. The text comments that the rich man goes away grieving because as stated in Mark 10:22 (NRSV) "he had many possessions" The needle statement is presented as a task that is impossible to occur if

it is referencing an actual needle or difficult to do if it is referencing a camel going through a specific and difficult gate. Regardless of what is being referenced, both statements allude to the stumbling blocks and difficulty that possessions and other situations, power, mindsets, etc. can provide in the pursuit of the kingdom of God. The rich man's reaction is an example of how one person might respond in pursuit of the kingdom of God.

One question that arose from this work continues to surround the rich man and his response. While he does go away grieving, the text never provides what happens next for the man. Is this because it is not important to the point of the story? Is it because the Gospel of Mark writer is not aware of what happens to him? Is the author aware, but it does not matter to the perspective that he is writing about Jesus? The Bible has several stories where there is no complete ending for the characters. Is the story left open ended so that the first century and 21st century audience can draw conclusions for themselves?

One thing from my research that has deeply resonated with me can be found in the statements from Williamson's commentary about the disciples and while they were not considered to be rich, "they belonged to a culture whose evaluation of wealth was fundamentally challenged by the teaching of Jesus. They were profoundly shaken."[12] Throughout this research, the reactions by people mentioned in the story has something that has struck me. Williamson's statement points to another reaction and provides some context to it. When learning about the disciples' reactions, it struck me that many of the reactions are based in societal mores, values and beliefs of that time, something that Williamson points out and something that I had not previously considered. Connected to this, it also resonates with me that while the circumstances, technology, and life situations may have changed- the values of the first century Roman Empire can still be found today, making the lessons of the rich man ones that are timeless and applicable

then and now. Another aspect of this research that continues to resonate with me continues to be the rich man's response. As stated previously, one of the questions I had initially surrounded the rich man's grieving. Williamson states that, "traditionally, wealth was a sign of the blessing of God. That Jesus viewed it as a hindrance to entering the Kingdom of God was amazing."[12] Jesus's upside-down kingdom is prevalent in this story and while I had understood the point of the story to be about not allowing materials belongs, power, money, etc. to get in the way of my relationship with Christ, the reactions of the disciples and the rich man have a profound and powerful impact on the story once they are given more attention and have helped me to see this story in a new and exciting light.

Step 5B: Summarizing and Concluding your Interpretation For Yourself and Others
Goal 5b: to summarize your interpretation based on what you've learned, and to state the implications for you and/or your faith community.

1. **State your interpretation. Considering all the work you have done on this passage, what do you think your passage means in the first-century context of the Gospel of Matthew or Mark?**
    a. **You should be able to state this in 1-3 sentences. Try to stay as close to the passage and what you've learned about it as possible. This is not a summary of the passage. This is also not a sermon; avoid "we" language. This is your interpretation about what is happening and why it matters.**

Mark 10:16-31 is a passage that astonishes and shocks its first century audience because Jesus's statements on entering the kingdom of heaven and the first being last and the last being first go against societal norms during their time. It is a reinterpretation and reconfiguring of what it means to be wealthy, the impact of social status, and emphasizes the importance of discipleship. During the first century, the rich man was viewed as an important figure in society, wealth was viewed as a gift from God; however, Jesus states that someone like the rich man must give his possessions to the poor in order to inherit the kingdom of God. In the disciples' shock and astonishment, Jesus recalibrates their views by telling them to change their priorities from focusing on what society tells them is important

as it relates to wealth and social standing and focus rather on the poor and giving up the materialistic objects and mindsets that separate themselves from God.

2. **Implications for you and/or your faith community: Drawing out the implications of a passage for a particular faith community (or for yourself!) is the first step in preaching or teaching. This section asks you to engage in that first step. However, you cannot draw out the implications of a passage for a "generic" person (there isn't one!) or a generic faith community (there isn't one of these, either!). Interpretation of a passage needs to be pertinent to a particular community.**
    a. **So, just as you named your lenses and your location when you began to interpret this passage, describe the faith community context you would want to target this interpretation towards. This should be possible in about 3-5 sentences. If you do not have a faith community context or you are not interested in directing the interpretation of this text towards one, then describe how you are positioned to receive the interpretation from this passage, and/or describe a non-faith-based community context that might benefit from the insights of this passage.**

My faith community consists of a medium sized United Methodist Church congregation that is situated in an affluent suburb of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The multi-generational congregation consists of mostly persons who identify as either upper or upper middle class, Caucasian/white, cisgender, heterosexual persons. This faith community can be described as more programmatic than theological. Currently, the congregation is exploring ways in which they can be the hands and feet of Jesus to a more diverse and broader community that goes beyond the small-town that it is located.

    b. **State the implications of your interpretation for you or your community (1-2 paragraphs). What would be the thing you'd really want your community or yourself to remember from teaching or a sermon on this passage? What's the big take away?**
        i. **Be sure your links between your interpretation of the passage itself and your conclusions about these topics are clear. My most common comment is "where do you see that in the scripture text?" Anticipate that comment and tell me before I can make it!**

ii. Do not write a sermon or provide a lesson plan. Just sketch the ideas that would be the backbone of any kind of proclamation of this text that you would make.

Similar to the context of its first century audience, the 21st century audience also shares a similar societal viewpoint about what society classifies as important- the rich man would still be viewed as an important member of society with affluence and significance in 2024. Society continues to revere those who have amassed significant wealth. In this passage, Jesus emphasized the importance of discipleship and following him by stating, "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."[3] Jesus's emphasis in Mark 10:17-31 rang true in the first century and continues to ring true 20 centuries later. Jesus is still calling his followers to rid their lives of anything that separates themselves from him- whether that be like the rich man and his possessions, or anything else that may separate followers of Christ from him- whether that is a job, power, a position in society, or the opinions that others hold about them.

The reinterpretation and reconfiguring of status and the first being last and the last being first is still the clarion call of Christ. Jesus continues to call his disciples then and now to let go of those things and while it may seem difficult or impossible, Jesus reminds his disciples in Mark 10:27, "With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God."[3] While technology may have advanced, communication systems may have evolved, and the access to information has become commonplace and mundane, Jesus continues to call his followers to give to care for the marginalized and to remember that, "many who are first will be last, and the last will be first."[3]

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