

## ENGAGING GOSPEL DOCTRINE 143

### Lesson 17: [“What Shall I Do That I May Inherit Eternal Life?”](#)

**Class Member Reading:** Mark 10:17-30; 12:41-44; Luke 12:13-21; 14; 16

Mark 10:17-30

<sup>17</sup>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?**” <sup>18</sup>Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. <sup>19</sup>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.’” <sup>20</sup>He said to him, “Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth.” <sup>21</sup>Jesus, **looking at him, loved him** and said, “You lack one thing; go, sell what you own (The Greek is closer to “whatever you own”), and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” <sup>22</sup>When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions. Several points worth focusing on: 1) the young man immediately asked about what is most important; 2) Jesus used this as a teaching opportunity, drawing out what the man already knew; 3) Jesus loved the man for what he was already doing and 4) pointed out what he still lacked, what would most challenge him; 5) Jesus urged the man to “come, follow” him; 6) the man was not able to rise to the occasion when shown what would benefit him and grant him what he sought. Jesus’ words are not necessarily a universal prescription—this is what this particular man needed, what he himself lacked, what he had to learn. Of course, other scriptures have strong words to say about wealth.

<sup>23</sup>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!” <sup>24</sup>And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! <sup>25</sup>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.” (The story about the camel going through the Jerusalem gate is a myth. The camel was proverbially big, the needle proverbially small) <sup>26</sup>They were greatly astounded and said to one another, “Then who can be saved?” <sup>27</sup>Jesus looked at them and said, “For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; **for God all things are possible.**” Perhaps Jesus is saying that it is in our nature to crave wealth and power, and if we don’t focus on God, keep God first, we will lose perspective? “Whereas human beings generally think of wealth as an unmitigated good that provides access to abundant life, Jesus paradoxically describes it as an impediment to the attainment of that which is truly important...salvation comes through a miraculous action of God rather than through the striving of humanity” (Marcus, Mark 8-16, 736-737)

<sup>28</sup>Peter began to say to him, “Look, we have left everything and followed you.” <sup>29</sup>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,<sup>30</sup> 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. “With persecutions” is such a baffling addition. To understand it, we need to see that Jesus is speaking of the eschatological community—Jesus’ followers may lose family, but gain the family of believers; they may lose possessions, but will join a community that cares for its own.

#### Mark 12:41-44

<sup>41</sup>He sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. <sup>42</sup>A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. <sup>43</sup>Then he called his disciples and said to them, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow **has put in more** than all those who are contributing to the treasury. <sup>44</sup>For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.” **We are judged not only by our actions, but our intentions, what our actions mean to us.**

#### Luke 12:13-21

<sup>13</sup>Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.” <sup>14</sup>But he said to him, “Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?” <sup>15</sup>And he said to them, “Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for **one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.**” <sup>16</sup>Then he told them a parable: “The land of a rich man produced abundantly. <sup>17</sup>And he thought to himself (Note the self-centeredness, literally talking to himself because he has no one else in mind), ‘What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?’ <sup>18</sup>Then he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. <sup>19</sup>And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.’ <sup>20</sup>But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life (Greek: soul, creates parallelism) is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ <sup>21</sup>So it is with those who **store up treasures for themselves** but are not rich toward God.” **What will our legacy be? What will our lives and our goods do after we are gone?**

#### Luke 14

**14**On one occasion when Jesus was going to the house of a leader of the Pharisees to eat a meal on the sabbath, they were watching him closely. <sup>2</sup>Just then, in front of him, there was a man who had dropsy. <sup>3</sup>And Jesus asked the lawyers and Pharisees, “Is it lawful to cure people on the sabbath, or not?” <sup>4</sup>But they were silent. So Jesus took him and healed him, and sent him away. <sup>5</sup>Then he said to them, “If one of you has a child or an ox that has fallen into a well, will you not immediately pull it out on a sabbath day?” <sup>6</sup>And they

could not reply to this.

<sup>7</sup>When he noticed how the guests chose the places of honor, he told them a parable.

<sup>8</sup>“When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not sit down at the place of honor, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited by your host; <sup>9</sup>and the host who invited both of you may come and say to you, ‘Give this person your place,’ and then in disgrace you would start to take the lowest place. <sup>10</sup>But when you are invited, go and **sit down at the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher’**; then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at the table with you. I have found that this is excellent relationship advice. I try to err on the side of caution and humility when assuming what I know, how much I understand, how much I mean to someone, etc... and then I can be reassured through communication and be “raised” to the truth. <sup>11</sup>For **all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.**” So worth reflection and discussion. <sup>12</sup>He said also to the one who had invited him, “When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. <sup>13</sup>But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. <sup>14</sup>And you will be blessed, because **they cannot repay you**, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.” So challenging. When in our lives to we help those who cannot repay us, cannot help us in return? (This needs to be balanced by self-care and having sufficient resources to continue serving, of course. But this type of service also nourishes and rewards).

<sup>15</sup>One of the dinner guests, on hearing this, said to him, “Blessed is anyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!” <sup>16</sup>Then Jesus said to him, “Someone gave a great dinner and invited many. <sup>17</sup>At the time for the dinner he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, ‘Come; for everything is ready now.’ <sup>18</sup>**But they all alike began to make excuses.** What opportunities do we miss because we got lost in the mundane? The first said to him, ‘I have bought a piece of land, and I must go out and see it; please accept my regrets.’ <sup>19</sup>Another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please accept my regrets.’ <sup>20</sup>Another said, ‘I have just been married, and therefore I cannot come.’ <sup>21</sup>So the slave returned and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and said to his slave, ‘Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.’ <sup>22</sup>And the slave said, ‘Sir, what you ordered has been done, and there is still room.’ <sup>23</sup>Then the master said to the slave, ‘Go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to come in, so that my house may be filled. <sup>24</sup>For I tell you, none of those who were invited will taste my dinner.’”

<sup>25</sup>Now large crowds were traveling with him; and he turned and said to them, <sup>26</sup>“Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple. <sup>27</sup>Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. <sup>28</sup>**For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it?**

<sup>29</sup>Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to ridicule him, <sup>30</sup>saying, ‘This fellow **began to build and was not able to finish.**’

<sup>31</sup>Or what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand? <sup>32</sup>If he cannot, then, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for the terms of peace. I often reflect on these scriptures—it is so important to think through our choices and make sure that we have sufficient resources to see a project, relationship, etc through all the way. <sup>33</sup>So therefore, **none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.** I think we can both have our possessions and also “give them up”—this is what the temple covenants mean to me. We can surrender what we have, and thereby be willing to give up what we need to when we need to <sup>34</sup>“Salt is good; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? <sup>35</sup>It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; they throw it away. Let anyone with ears to hear listen!”

## Luke 16

**16**Then Jesus said to the disciples, “There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was squandering his property. <sup>2</sup>So he summoned him and said to him, ‘What is this that I hear about you? Give me an accounting of your management, because you cannot be my manager any longer.’ <sup>3</sup>Then the manager said to himself, ‘What will I do, now that my master is taking the position away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. <sup>4</sup>I have decided what to do so that, when I am dismissed as manager, people may welcome me into their homes.’ <sup>5</sup>So, summoning his master’s debtors one by one, he asked the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ <sup>6</sup>He answered, ‘A hundred jugs of olive oil.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it fifty.’ <sup>7</sup>Then he asked another, ‘And how much do you owe?’ He replied, ‘A hundred containers of wheat.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill and make it eighty.’ <sup>8</sup>And **his master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly**; for the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light. <sup>9</sup>And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes. <sup>10</sup>“Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. <sup>11</sup>If then you have not been faithful with the dishonest wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? <sup>12</sup>And if you have not been faithful with what belongs to another, who will give you what is your own?”

One of the more perplexing passages in the gospels. The Oxford Bible Commentary provides a coherent explanation that preserves the challenge of the natural order of things so common in Jesus’ teachings: “the parable tells a story of an inefficient steward who, facing dismissal for his indolence, meets the crisis with uncharacteristic vigour and ingenuity. The master, though defrauded, recognizes the initiative and, himself working from the perspective of ‘unrighteous mammon’, actually commends the steward’s shrewdness. There is nothing to say that he reinstates him, but sharing in his worldly stance, he can appreciate a sensible move, indeed an ingenious one, when he sees it. ‘If

only', says the parable, 'the sons of light had the same appreciation of the crisis confronting them in the drawing near of the Kingdom, and the same energy in meeting it'" (OBC, 948). In other words, we have all been unwise and indolent, and spiritual reality challenges us with a crisis (or multiple crises) that we must rise to meet with creativity and vigor.

<sup>13</sup>No slave can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. **You cannot serve God and wealth.**" I think having wealth and serving wealth are two different things... <sup>14</sup>The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all this, and they ridiculed him. <sup>15</sup>So he said to them, "You are those who **justify yourselves in the sight of others**; but **God knows your hearts**; for what is prized by human beings is an abomination in the sight of God. Another point worth reflection and discussion: what do we as humans value? What does God value? Where do they overlap, and where do they stand at tension? <sup>16</sup>"The law and the prophets were in effect until John came; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is proclaimed, and everyone tries to enter it by force. <sup>17</sup>But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one stroke of a letter in the law to be dropped. <sup>18</sup>"Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and whoever marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery. (Explain Jesus' view of marriage, as most clearly described in Mark 10:6-9)

<sup>19</sup>"There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. <sup>20</sup>And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, <sup>21</sup>who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man's table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. <sup>22</sup>The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. <sup>23</sup>In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. <sup>24</sup>He called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames.' <sup>25</sup>But Abraham said, 'Child, remember **that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. The theme of the "great reversal" is strongly emphasized in Luke. I think Mosiah 2:28 applies here.** <sup>26</sup>Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us.' <sup>27</sup>He said, 'Then, father, I beg you to send him to my father's house—<sup>28</sup>for I have five brothers—that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment.' <sup>29</sup>Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.' <sup>30</sup>He said, 'No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' <sup>31</sup>He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'" (a clever nod to the belief in the resurrection)

**Additional Reading:** [Matthew 19:16–30](#); [Luke 18:18–30](#); [21:1–4](#); [Jacob 2:18–19](#).

### [Matthew 19:16–30](#)

<sup>16</sup>Then someone came to him and said, “Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?” <sup>17</sup>And he said to him, “Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.” (Note how Matthew changes Mark so Jesus doesn’t seem to question his goodness) <sup>18</sup>He said to him, “Which ones?” And Jesus said, “You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; <sup>19</sup>Honor your father and mother; also, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” <sup>20</sup>The young man said to him, “I have kept all these; what do I still lack?” <sup>21</sup>Jesus said to him, “If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” <sup>22</sup>When the young man heard this word, he went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

<sup>23</sup>Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Truly I tell you, it will be hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven. <sup>24</sup>Again I tell you, 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.” <sup>25</sup>When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astounded and said, “Then who can be saved?” <sup>26</sup>But Jesus looked at them and said, “For mortals it is impossible, but for God all things are possible.” <sup>27</sup>Then Peter said in reply, “Look, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?” <sup>28</sup>Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man is seated on the throne of his glory, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. <sup>29</sup>And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields, for my name’s sake, will receive a hundredfold, and will inherit eternal life. <sup>30</sup>But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.

### [Luke 18:18–30](#)

<sup>18</sup>A certain ruler asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” <sup>19</sup>Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. <sup>20</sup>You know the commandments: ‘You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; Honor your father and mother.’” <sup>21</sup>He replied, “I have kept all these since my youth.” <sup>22</sup>When Jesus heard this, he said to him, “There is still one thing lacking. Sell all that you own and distribute the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” <sup>23</sup>But when he heard this, he became sad; for he was very rich. <sup>24</sup>Jesus looked at him and said, “How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! <sup>25</sup>Indeed, 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.” <sup>26</sup>Those who heard it said, “Then who can be saved?” <sup>27</sup>He replied, “What is impossible for mortals is possible for God.” <sup>28</sup>Then Peter said, “Look, we have left our homes and followed you.” <sup>29</sup>And he said to them, “Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, <sup>30</sup>who will not get back very much more in this age, and in the age to come eternal

life.” (both Matthew and Luke remove the strange “with persecutions”)

Luke [21:1–4](#)

21 He looked up and saw rich people putting their gifts into the treasury; <sup>2</sup>he also saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. <sup>3</sup>He said, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them; <sup>4</sup>for all of them have contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on.”

[Jacob 2:18–19](#)

18 But before ye seek for riches, seek ye for the kingdom of God.

19 And after ye have obtained a hope in Christ ye shall obtain riches, if ye seek them; and ye will seek them for the intent to do good—to clothe the naked, and to feed the hungry, and to liberate the captive, and administer relief to the sick and the afflicted. Can’t get a much better summary than this.

**Scripture Chain:** [Matthew 6:19–21](#); [Matthew 6:33](#); [Mark 10:28–30](#); [Jacob 2:18–19](#); [D&C 6:6–7](#)

[Matthew 6:19–21](#)

19 ¶ **Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth**, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

20 But lay up for yourselves **treasures in heaven**, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

21 **For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.** (What do we value? Where do we spend our time? What do we think about?)

[Matthew 6:33](#)

33 But **seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness**; and all these things shall be added unto you.

[Mark 10:28–30](#)

28 ¶ Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee.

29 And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left

house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's,

30 But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.

[Jacob 2:18–19](#)

18 But before ye seek for riches, seek ye for the kingdom of God.

19 And after ye have obtained a hope in Christ ye shall obtain riches, if ye seek them; and ye will seek them for the intent to do good—to clothe the naked, and to feed the hungry, and to liberate the captive, and administer relief to the sick and the afflicted.

[D&C 6:6–7](#)

6 Now, as you have asked, behold, I say unto you, keep my commandments, and seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion;

7 **Seek not for riches but for wisdom**, and behold, the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto you, and then shall you be made rich. Behold, **he that hath eternal life is rich.**