

GRAPE Webinar
30 October 2025

Speaking Notes
Mark 10:17-27

Introduction

The Grape platform has chosen to use the Contextual Bible Studies/ Reading methodology to connect issues within our context to the biblical text in order to elicit an appropriate and authentic witness to the challenges of our society. CBS has its roots in Latin America and has been successfully used by especially previously disadvantaged communities over the last five decades in a variety of settings. In a real sense, people are reading the Bible with new and fresh eyes thereby ensuring that God's word becomes new and life-giving to them.

CBS has many features, but the central feature is found in the see-judge/discern- act cycle. We are asked to constantly see what is happening in our society, especially in our own unique contexts. Once we have sufficiently analysed our situation we turn to the Bible to find passages that speaks to our context. Flowing from these conversations, we can hopefully find ways where the Spirit is already active, and where we can be the hands and feet of God. Of course, this is an intensive process and may require many hours of patient community work, but in the end it is all worthwhile as people then have a real sense to act where God is busy working or to use an old Evangelical expression, where we can stand in the gap.

The rich man in Mark 10

In the course of the day and on the remainder of this series of webinars, we will be focusing on the imperative of a universal basic income guarantee. You will hear presentations on our context and no doubt a great deal of statistics. My brief, in this very short devotion, is to see if the Bible speaks to our context. Indeed, I have found that there are many instances in the Bible where God intimates and intervenes in the lives of God's people. But for our sake today, I want to focus on the story that is very familiar to us, the story of the rich man in Mark 10:17-27.

One of the questions we ask in CBS training is, what does the text say to us - to summarise - Jesus is approached by a wealthy man who wants to know what he should do to inherit eternal life. Jesus then answers him by quoting parts of the 10 commandments. The rich man confirms that he has kept these commandments since the days of his youth. Jesus then challenges him to sell his possessions and to give it to the poor. This saddens the man as he was very wealthy. Jesus then turns to his disciples and says that it would be easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Now, time does not permit me to go through the entire narrative - instead I want to focus very briefly on the fact that when Jesus reminded this man to keep the commandments dealing with human interaction, Jesus mentions a command that does not form part of the original Decalogue - he says to the man: do not cheat. Here, he also means - do not defraud.

To defraud means not to deprive or withhold something that is rightfully owed. If we accept that definition then certain passages from the OT immediately comes to mind. Particularly (Deuteronomy 24:14-15): You shall not withhold the wages of poor and needy labourers...you

shall pay them living wages...otherwise they might cry out against you, and you would incur guilt". See also Leviticus 19:13 "You shall not defraud your neighbour, you shall not steal". And Malachi 3:5 "I will come near to you in judgement ... against those who defraud a hired worker of his wage".

These texts makes it clear that Jesus's inclusion of this command was not by any means a slip of the tongue. In his article on this very subject, Michael Peppard from Fordham University in New York argues that Jesus knew the true origin of this man's wealth. It was bound in the exploitation of people and the unscrupulous acquisition of lands and estates at the cost of ordinary hard-working people. And so, Jesus instruction to sell his wealth and give it to the poor, was not only a spiritual requirement to enter God's kingdom, one day, but a serious instruction to redistribute the wealth to the very people he had impoverished.

Conclusion

It is around this time in the CBS process that we ask certain pertinent questions such as: what does do not defraud means in our present context? Who usually defrauds who? What recourse do those that has been defrauded has?

The very fact that Jesus instructs/ commands us not to defraud, should give all of us reason to pause - and here we definitely mean all of us, including governments, tech executives, corporations, landlords and other operators of capital.

In speaking to this man about life, eternal life as well as living this life here on earth, we too are called to confront institutions and individuals and systems that defraud us a people.

In the Name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Amen.