

“Possibility Thinking?”—Mark 10:26-27

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Possibility Thinking?”, is Mark 10:26-27 → *And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to Him, “Then who can be saved?” Jesus looked at them and said, “With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God.”* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

How do you view yourself? Are you an optimistic or a pessimistic person? Being optimistic means you have “an inclination to put the most favorable construction upon actions and events or . . . anticipate the best possible outcome.” (Merriam-Webster, I. (1996). Merriam-Webster’s collegiate dictionary (10th ed.). Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster.) Likewise, being pessimistic means you have “an inclination to emphasize adverse aspects, conditions, and possibilities or . . . expect the worst possible outcome.” (Merriam-Webster, I. (1996). Merriam-Webster’s collegiate dictionary (10th ed.). Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster.)

Throughout the 1900's a man by the name of Norman Vincent Peale promoted optimism through his book entitled “The Power of Positive Thinking.” Serving as a Reformed minister, he combined “religious” teachings with

psychiatric methods in his concepts of positive thinking and its powerful work in people's lives. His teachings influenced many people, even redefining many Christian's ideas of faith, through a magazine entitled "Guideposts." It shared positive "faith-based" experiences from people's lives with the purpose of instilling in us a positive perspective of life in the midst of all the difficult challenges and struggles we face each day. Another Reformed minister during the last century re-packaged positive thinking into possibility thinking and eventually built a church made out of glass called the Crystal Cathedral.

At face value, it appears Jesus was promoting possibility thinking in our text when He says, *all things are possible with God*. However, Jesus' words state something more than "If you can dream it, you can do it." It is more than simply faith in yourself to be able to accomplish something. Scripture's teaching on "possibility thinking" **is directly connected to a relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ alone!**

Jesus was approached by a rich man who thought there was a good "possibility" for him to get eternal life by his own doing. He thought his possibilities were pretty good since he had performed in outward obedience to God's laws quite well. After encountering this rich man and his struggle with being able to follow Him, Jesus described the impossible in Mark 10:25 → *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.*

It may not have been too difficult for Jesus' disciples to wrap their brain around the impossibility of a rich man being saved. Most Jews of Jesus' day may not only have thought that the possibilities of them being saved were good but could actually see not being saved as an impossibility since they were God's favorites! But for *a camel to go through the eye of a needle*? That's impossible! This part of Jesus statement immediately put their own eternal destiny into question!

Verse 26 of our text says *they were exceedingly astonished, and said to Him, "Then who can be saved?"* Good question. Trying to put a camel through a needle's eye is a fruitless effort. It just can't be done. And even if it could be done it would have to be done by someone powerful enough to do it! Exactly!!

The struggle at hand is not your circumstances—your economic status, your health, your job, your spouse, your co-workers, your possessions, and so forth. It is a struggle with the impossible in the midst of your performance in those circumstances. As with all performance, one can easily see that an individual's performance to meet perfect standards falls far short. The focus on your performance for your spiritual identity and salvation will lead you to see how impossible it is to perfectly meet God's standards and commandments and quickly give up trying. It can even lead you to think that

God is not performing “up to par” for you in your life. This is how people, like the man Jesus encountered, become *disheartened* and *walk away sorrowful* (cf. Mark 10:22) into a life of unbelief, burden and rebellion against God.

Thus, Jesus’ possibility statement in verse 27 of our text: *With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God.* If you are going to look to any performance for your forgiveness of sins and eternal life **you look only to God’s performance for you!** The impossible was standing before these disciples’ very eyes in the Person & Work of Jesus! Before them stood a man Who displayed power over all the affects of sin in life such as sickness, pain and death! Here was a man Who could defy the laws of nature! Before them stood a man Who could make the impossible possible! Colossians 2:9-10 says: *In Christ the whole fullness of God dwells bodily, and you have been filled in Him, Who is the head of all rule and authority!*

Think of the possibilities you have in Jesus:

- A sinner can stand before God righteous, holy and blameless of **any and every** sin in life? 2 Corinthians 5:21 says: *For our sake God made Him to be sin Who knew no sin (i.e. Jesus), so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God!*
- Your performance standards of God’s Law have been perfectly met?

Romans 8:3-4 says: *For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*

- You need no longer try to justify your performance, good or bad, because the complete justification has been met in the performance of Jesus **for you!** Romans 3:23-24 says that *all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus!*
- Someone can actually love an unlovable person such as I? 1 John 4:10 says: *In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins!*

Salvation is completely God's work of breaking your heart, hardened by sin in self-righteousness and rebellion. His Holy Spirit brings you to repent of your sins and creates a new heart of trust in Jesus' perfect life, death and resurrection for your forgiveness, life and salvation. **God's love in Christ produces the impossible in your life today!**

When the rich man expressed his self-righteousness, believing that his

performance of God's commandments was perfect, Jesus simply looked at him and *loved him*. (cf. Mark 10:21) We all need the Holy Spirit to instill faith in our hearts to see our need for eternal life on God's terms. God's terms are always defined in His **eternal love for you in the Person & Work of Jesus Christ!** Even if it possible for you to walk away from God's love for you it is impossible for God to stop loving you because His is a forever love in Jesus! As Romans 8:38-39 promises: *Neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

God has made it totally possible for you to be saved. He came in the person of His Son, Jesus, to live a sinless life for your inability to do so! He died as the perfect sacrifice, taking the punishment for all your sins for all time upon Himself! He rose again to give you victory over death and the devil in the resurrection on the Last Day! Christ's performance **for you** has made the impossible possible for your eternity!

Possibility thinking? It's not a matter of believing in some dream we believe is possible for us to accomplish. Rather, it's a matter of trusting in the reality that Jesus has accomplished the impossible for you and the Holy Spirit gives you the faith to love, serve and obey God, impossible as it is! Amen.