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THE BLINDNESS OF MATERIAL WEALTH IN MARK 10:17-27: A LESSON FOR THE SEMINARIAN OF 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract

The seminarian of the 21st century lives in an era characterized by grave political instability, insecurity and economic crises laden with a high cost of living. Thus, to forestall this unbearable situation, many youths have abandoned their schools, trades, towns, families to embark on various crude and evil means of survival. Some have taken to prostitution, seeking greener pastures via the crude Libyan route, kidnapping, advance fee fraud etc. The consequence of this enormous, the streets, shops and craft workshops are deserted without apprentices and families are in pains and tears at the death of their children who have lost their lives. Again, the insufficient manpower in various communities has heightened the level of suffering and poverty in the land. Apart from that, it is really difficult to convince the few youths left at home not to embark on such venture since the few who are acclaimed 'successful' display their flirts of cars and material wealth in a fascinating manner for all to see. However, the encounter between Jesus and the young rich man in the text of Mk10:17-27 reveals the essence of human life and its destiny and the blindness of material wealth. The tragic decision to turn down the invitation of Christ reflects a greater love for his material possessions than for the everlasting bliss of eternal life offered by Christ Jesus. This brings to mind the basic question *what is the essence of life? And what is the meaning of success and the source of happiness? How can a disciple of Christ define his identity in this situation?* Thus, this paper hopes to undertake a detailed exegesis of the text, its theological functions in its immediate and wider context and its theological significance for the seminarian of the 21st century. It will also proffer a number of recommendations to strengthen the discourse on the authentic formation of the seminarian of the 21st century.

Keyword: Blindness, Wealth, Seminarian, Youth, Human life, Formation

Introduction

The 21st century is an epoch of immense human, economic, scientific, social, and political expansions and prospects but loaded with grave crises, challenges and failures. The struggle to make the world a global village aided with information and communication technology has enhance the identity, values, proficiency, productivity and needs of the human person within the globe. On the other hand, this era is typified by grave unstable political climate, insecurity, unemployment, climate change, health issues, economic crisis e.t.c. These crises have great effects on the life style, creativity and identity of the human person in a society where economic power is the centre of gravity. Consequently, the human person is tempted to mislay its values and ultimate goal in the bid to survival. Here, material wealth becomes a vital tool of continued existence and happiness.

So, to avert these unbearable circumstances, many youths have abandoned their schools, trades, towns, families to embark on various crude and evil means of survival. Some have taken to prostitution, seeking greener pastures via the crude Libyan route, kidnapping, advance free fraud etc. The consequence of this is enormous on the true realization of human dignity. The streets, shops and craft workshops are deserted without apprentices and families are in pains and tears at the death of their children who have lost their lives. Again, the insufficient manpower in various communities has heightened the level of suffering and poverty in the land. Apart from that, it is really difficult to convince the few youths left at home not to embark on such venture since the few who are acclaimed 'successful' display their flirts of cars and material wealth in a fascinating manner for all to see.

However, the encounter between Jesus and the young rich man in the text of Mk10:17-31 reveals the essence of the true dignity of the human life and its destiny against the blindness of material wealth. The tragic decision to turn down the invitation of Christ reflects a greater love for his material possessions than for the everlasting bliss of eternal life offered by Christ Jesus to bring mankind to its fullness of human dignity. This brings to mind the basic question *what is the essence of life? And what is the meaning of success and the source of happiness? How can the person of the 21st century define his Christian identity and dignity as disciple of Christ in this situation?* Thus, this paper undertakes a detailed exegesis of the text, its theological functions in its immediate and wider context and its theological significance for the person of the 21st century. It will also

proffer a number of recommendations to strengthen the discourse on the authentic formation of the human person of the 21st century.

The Text of Mark 10:17-31

a. The Text

17 Καὶ ἐκπορευομένου αὐτοῦ εἰς ὁδὸν προσδραμῶν εἷς καὶ γονυπετήσας αὐτὸν ἐπηρώτα αὐτόν· διδάσκαλε ἀγαθέ, τί ποιήσω ἵνα ζωὴν αἰώνιον κληρονομήσω; 18 ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτῷ· τί με λέγεις ἀγαθόν; οὐδεὶς ἀγαθὸς εἰ μὴ εἷς ὁ θεός.¹⁹ τὰς ἐντολὰς οἶδας· μὴ φονεύσης, μὴ μοιχεύσης, μὴ κλέψης, μὴ ψευδομαρτυρήσης, μὴ ἀποστερήσης, τίμα τὸν πατέρα σου καὶ τὴν μητέρα. 20 ὁ δὲ ἔφη αὐτῷ· διδάσκαλε, ταῦτα πάντα ἐφυλαξάμην ἐκ νεότητός μου. 21 ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς ἐμβλέψας αὐτῷ ἠγάπησεν αὐτὸν καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ· ἔν σε ὑστερεῖ· ὕπαγε, ὅσα ἔχεις πώλησον καὶ δὸς [τοῖς] πτωχοῖς, καὶ ἔξεις θησαυρὸν ἐν οὐρανῷ, καὶ δεῦρο ἀκολούθει μοι. 22 ὁ δὲ στυγνάσας ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ ἀπῆλθεν λυπούμενος· ἦν γὰρ ἔχων κτήματα πολλά. 23 Καὶ περιβλεψάμενος ὁ Ἰησοῦς λέγει τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ· πῶς δυσκόλως οἱ τὰ χρήματα ἔχοντες εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ εἰσελεύσονται. 24 οἱ δὲ μαθηταὶ ἐθαμβοῦντο ἐπὶ τοῖς λόγοις αὐτοῦ. ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς πάλιν ἀποκριθεὶς λέγει αὐτοῖς· τέκνα, πῶς δύσκολόν ἐστιν εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ εἰσελθεῖν. 25 εὐκοπώτερόν ἐστιν κάμηλον διὰ [τῆς] τρυμαλιᾶς [τῆς] ραφίδος διελθεῖν ἢ πλούσιον εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ εἰσελθεῖν. 26 οἱ δὲ περισσῶς ἐξεπλήσσοντο λέγοντες πρὸς ἑαυτούς· καὶ τίς δύναται σωθῆναι; 27 ἐμβλέψας αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς λέγει· παρὰ ἀνθρώποις ἀδύνατον, ἀλλ' οὐ παρὰ θεῷ· πάντα γὰρ δυνατὰ παρὰ τῷ θεῷ. 28 Ἦρξατο λέγειν ὁ Πέτρος αὐτῷ· ἰδοὺ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν πάντα καὶ ἠκολουθήκαμέν σοι. 29 ἔφη ὁ Ἰησοῦς· ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, οὐδεὶς ἐστὶν ὃς ἀφήκεν οἰκίαν ἢ ἀδελφούς ἢ ἀδελφὰς ἢ μητέρα ἢ πατέρα ἢ τέκνα ἢ ἀγροὺς ἕνεκεν ἐμοῦ καὶ ἕνεκεν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου. 30 ἐὰν μὴ λάβῃ ἑκατονταπλασίονα νῦν ἐν τῷ καιρῷ τούτῳ οἰκίας καὶ ἀδελφούς καὶ ἀδελφὰς καὶ μητέρας καὶ τέκνα καὶ ἀγροὺς μετὰ διωγμῶν, καὶ ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι τῷ ἐρχομένῳ ζωὴν αἰώνιον. 31 πολλοὶ δὲ ἔσονται πρῶτοι ἔσχατοι καὶ [οἱ] ἔσχατοι πρῶτοι.

b. Translation of Mark 10:17-31

¹⁷And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” ¹⁸And Jesus said to him “why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. ¹⁹ You know the commandments: `Do not kill, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.’“ ²⁰And he said to him, “Teacher, all these I have observed from my youth.” ²¹And Jesus looking upon him loved him, and said to him, “You lack one thing; go, sell what

you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.”²² At that saying his countenance fell, and he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions.²³ And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it will be for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!”²⁴ And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, “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 man to enter the kingdom of God.”²⁶ And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to him, “Then who can be saved?”²⁷ Peter began to say to him, “Lo, we have left everything and followed you.”²⁸ Peter began to say to him, “Lo, we have left everything and 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 lands, for my sake and for the gospel,³⁰ who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life.³¹ But many that are first will be last, and the last first.”

The Background of the Text of Mark 10:17-31

The text of Mark 10:17-31 is situated within the larger corpus of the journey outside Galilee and movement towards Jerusalem. Here Mark appears to regard this text as a single unit which expresses the true meaning of discipleship and presents the necessary condition for entrance into the kingdom of God. Thus, he places it after chapter 10:13-16 which defines the entrance into the kingdom and encloses it by the third major prophecy of the passion of Christ in 10:32-34.

This is based on the purpose of projecting the Christian faith in a climate of uncertainty where martyrdom poses a grave danger to the faith of the people.¹ In view of that, the Marcan Christ continues to speak and act meaningfully in the context of crisis. In order to achieve this, the evangelist employs vivid narrative style characterized by simple sentence structure, parataxis, direct speech and historical present in order to make Jesus the contemporary of those who hear or read the account.²

Consequently, the text serves as caveat to the audience of the Gospel and post Marcan audience on the dangers and blindness of the love for material wealth against the forfeiture of the eternal life offered by Christ.

Content Analysis of the Text of Mk 10:17-31

Vv. 17-22 -- The Rich Young Man (10:17-22)

The setting of the amazing encounter between Christ and a young man in the text of Mark 10:17-31 is indicated by the verb *ἐκπορευομένου*, (as he was setting out) which is the present genitive middle masculine

participle of *ἐκπορευομαι* in v. 17. The eager approach of the man while Jesus was setting out on a journey characterized with his kneeling posture, the formal address and the weighty value of his question suggest a deep respect for Jesus and the genuine sincerity of the man. He did not insist upon a private conference with Jesus by night like Nicodemus. He came to consult Jesus as a distinguished rabbi and showed him the deference reserved for revered teachers of the law.³

The designation of Jesus as *διδασκαλε αγαγε* (good teacher) in the masculine vocative is a sincere tribute to the impression Jesus had made upon him. Though in the OT and Judaism, only God is characteristically called “good” but can be used in derived sense of “the good man”.⁴ However, Christ would have him looked upon him to be God, since none is good but God. Again the question of the young man *τί ποιήσω ἵνα ζωὴν αἰώνιον κληρονομήσω*; (what must I do so that I may inherit eternal life?) places the discussion which follows in an eschatological perspective. *Ἴνα* (so that) here signifies a purpose clause defining the function of *τί ποιήσω* (what must i). Also, the use *κληρονομήσω* (I may inherit) in proleptic aorist stresses the certainty of *ζωὴν αἰώνιον* (eternal life) to the young rich man.⁵ In addition, the form of the question implies a piety of achievement which stands in contrast to Jesus’ teaching that man must receive the kingdom as a gift from God in his helplessness like a child in 10: 15. Thus in v. 20 the man thought that there were other conditions beyond those written in the *torah*.

However, Jesus’ appeal to the commandments serves to re-echo the old OT teaching that the man who obeys the law will live (Deut. 30:15, Ezek. 33:15). He mentions the six commandments of the second table, which prescribe our duty to our neighbor, but puts the fourth commandment last, as that which must be remembered and observed. While the tenth commandment is put as “Do not defraud” showing that it is a rule of justice not to advance or enrich ourselves by doing wrong or injury to any other.⁶ These commandments clearly and incisively focus upon relationship with others as the discernible measures of a man’s reverence for God and obedience to his mandate.⁷ Here, Jesus does not accept as good any other will than the will of God revealed in the law. Hence his affirmation of the commandments is a demand for obedient action which recognizes both the sovereignty of God and the existence of neighbor.

In v. 20, the impulsive reply of the man *ταῦτα πάντα ἐφυλάξαμην* (all these I have kept) with the verb *φυλάσσω* in global aorist indicative middle reveals that he had made the law the norm of his entire life and had confidently fulfilled its demands perfectly. The reference to *ἐκ νεότητός μου* (from my youth) indicates a boy of twelve years who assume the yoke of the commandments and was held responsible for

their performance.⁸ In this sense, Mark presents the inquirer's idea of goodness as defined by human achievement, which has a sense of confidence that he had fulfilled the commandments from time but seeks to discover from another 'good' man what he can do to assure eternal life. But the referral of the question to God puts Jesus' response within the context of the lordship of God.

Nevertheless, the response of Jesus to the young man in v. 21 is not designed to shame him by exposing the real depth of the commandments but is an expression of genuine love for him and to set in correct perspective the honor of God.⁹ Thus, Jesus discovers the one thing he lacks, is the self-sacrificing devotion which characterizes every true follower of Christ. Thus, Jesus invites him to follow him now and experience the demands of life and the kingdom with the twelve disciples. This brings to fore that the keeping of the individual commandments is no substitute for the readiness of self-surrender to the absolute claim of God imposed through the call of the gospel.¹⁰ In this context obedience to the law is rendered ultimately in discipleship. Self-surrender means a renunciation of his achievement and the reception of messianic forgiveness through which man is released to stand under the law and to offer the obedience of love.¹¹ Therefore, the command to sell his property and to distribute the proceeds to the poor was appropriate to this particular situation. Since the promised treasure signifies the gift of eternal life at the revelation of the kingdom of God.

However the true answer to the question in v. 17 lays not so much on the command to sell all but as a necessary condition to answer the call to follow Jesus.¹² In this sense, the Marcan Christ clearly defines the cost of discipleship. Consequently, Mark in this text shows that Jesus separated persons from their normal historical existence as showed also in 1:16-20, 2:14, 3:13, in order to introduce them to a new quality of existence based upon fellowship with him. Jesus demand is radical. He claims the man utterly and completely, and removes anything that could interfere with an unconditional obedience. So following Jesus implies that Jesus himself is the answer to humankind's quest for life and authentic realization of true human dignity.

The grave disappointing and sorrowful response of the young man in v. 22 to the invitation of Christ in v. 21 is described by two verbs; *στυγνάσας* aorist participle active nominative masculine singular of *stugnázō* and *ἀπῆλθεν* 3rd person aorist indicative active singular *ἀπέρχομαι*. The verb 'stugnázō' occurs only twice in the New Testament in the text of Matt 16:3 and Mk 10:22. It means "become gloomy or dark, be shocked or appalled" but with *ἀπῆλθεν* in the aorist indicative active signifies temporal adverbial participle demonstrating two simultaneous actions of the young man of being 'shocked and went

away'. So, his tragic decision to turn away reflects a greater love for his possessions than for his life as Jesus states in Mark 4:19. Again it shows the depth of the demand of discipleship and the uniqueness of the twelve who abandoned everything in order to follow Jesus. Another crucial finding of mark in this text is that the law had not yet fulfilled its function of bring man's satisfaction with this world to an end and energized the thirst for righteousness and life.¹³ Consequently, Mark indicates for the first time that the man was rich in v. 22.

Vv. 23-27 -- The Danger of Riches (10:23-27)

The gesture of Jesus in v. 23 to look round depicted by the verb περιβλεψάμενος in aorist participle middle nominative masculine singular demonstrates the contrast of the running and kneeling approach in v. 17 and the slow retreat that ends the amazing encounter in v. 22. Thus, it became imperative for Jesus to turn and catechize those who have abandoned everything to follow Jesus. The comment of Jesus in v. 23b reaffirms the danger of attachment to wealth to the rejection of an infinitively important everlasting life that leads to the fullness of human dignity. This danger lies in the effects of wealth on the spiritual life, which claims the total dependence on God and develops a false sense of security. Material abundance therefore, is an enemy to the 'abundant of life' offered by Christ.¹⁴

Surprisingly, this response of Jesus meets with great amazement from the disciples. Mark expresses this 'shocked or amazement' of the disciples with another verb ἐθαμβοῦντο in an ingressive imperfect describing the shock that ended with the teaching of Christ as distinct from the amazement of the young man that did not allow for catechesis. The amazement of the disciples probably stems from the belief that prosperity is the blessing and favor from God for righteousness.¹⁵

However, Jesus did not fail to repeat his solemn warning of v. 23 in an absolute form in v. 24b, saying *how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God*, which is calculated to provoke careful reflection on the part of those confronted with the call of the Gospel. Consequently, he addresses his audience as τέκνα (children) in the vocative neuter plural, not in the sense of biological growth but in terms of understanding the divine principles of the kingdom of God. The hyperbolic comparative between the largest animal (camel) and the smallest opening (eye of a needle) used by Jesus with the verb εὐκοπώτερόν (easier) in the comparative adjective in v. 24b is the only existing comparative found in the NT.¹⁶ And it expresses what, humanly speaking, is impossible or absurd.¹⁷

Consequently, Jesus' response to the total rejection of his invitation leaves an exceeding astonishment in the face of the disciples which led to an inquiry; καὶ τίς δύναται σωθῆναι; (Then who can be

saved?). Accordingly, the response of Jesus in v. 27 to the query of the disciples in v. 26 places salvation beyond the spheres of human possibilities into the hands of God as his gift to humankind.

Vv. 28-31 -- The Reward of Discipleship

In v. 28 Peter acts as the spokesman for the disciples and shows an absolute understanding of v. 21. His affirmation which seems to be a note of self-congratulation is in positive contrast to the refusal of Jesus' invitation in v. 21 of a man who prizes material wealth than the invitation of the divine and supreme Creator.¹⁸ This is based on the fact that the disciples have fulfilled the two requirements of complete renunciation and of following Jesus.¹⁹

Conversely, the response of Jesus in vv. 29-31 to Peter's declaration in v. 28 defines Christianity in terms of promise and persecution, and history as the interplay of blessedness and suffering. This is pivoted on the divine principle that God takes nothing from a man without restoring it to him in a new and glorious form. So, whatever is lost in one society in v.29 will be regained a hundredfold in the new society created by the dynamics of the Gospel in v.30.²⁰ In this sense, the promise of eternal life in the age to come looks beyond the conflict of history to the glorious triumph assured through radical obedience of anyone to the will of God. The discourse ends in a caveat couched in antithetical parallelism in v. 31, in which Jesus demands a total and radical commitment sustained only in the act of following him faithfully.

Theology of Mk 10:17-31

The vivid narrative style of Mk 10:17-31 couched in simple sentence structure, parataxis, direct speech and often intersected with historical present is knitted with various theological themes. They are:

The Prophetic Mission of Christ Jesus

The actual encounter of Jesus with the rich man in Mk 10:17-31 clearly defines the prophetic identity of Jesus as the true Messiah who teaches and saves. Jesus' identification as *διδασκαλε* *agape* is based on the impression of his distinctive teachings, exercise of authority over demons and miracles on the mind of the people. (Mk 1:22, 27). Jesus' exclusive declaration of the attributive adjective *agape* to God is a self-revelation of his Christology and divinity. Indeed God only can be acclaimed perfectly good and not man. Since, God is all goodness and there is no evil in his nature. In this sense, only God has the authentic prophet mandate that can truly teach, sustain and lead humanity to its goal and fullness of dignity as destined by God. This is in line with the Lucan manifestos of

Christ in 4:18-19 “the spirit of the lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the lord”. Similarly, the Marcan Christ who consistently speaks and acts meaningfully in the context of crisis has the prophetic role to set humanity aright at all times. The implication is that humanity must realize its need to depend on God and do his will in order to fulfill its destiny and dignity. Thus, the imperative is that humankind must listen to him. (Mk 9:7b).

Material Wealth in Mark’s Theology

A closer survey of the Gospel of Mark reveals that he does not totally condemn wealth but does not seem to attach much importance to it in relation to the gospel message.²¹ Accordingly, the disciple of Christ is called to totally depend on divine providence and not on the temporary false security which wealth seems to provide. As a result, to follow Christ demands the adoption of the simplest way of life and subordination the comfort of life to the mission of Christ Jesus.²² Consequently, following and listening to Jesus without the distraction of material wealth is a source of abundant divine blessings, since the heavenly treasures offered by Christ is supremely greater than material wealth.

However, the young man’s tragic decision to turn down the invitation of Christ to an everlasting and abundant life is a reflection of an absolute foolishness. This unique rejection of divine bliss is based on the lack of the authentic understanding of the true identity of the self and its divine goals. The alignment and total dependence of the human person upon the securities and pleasures which material wealth offers is deluding and destructive blindness to the nature of the human spirit and its end. Hence, for Jesus the human person who is enslaved by material wealth has made external bliss impossibility like the head of a Carmel going through the eye of the needle. (Mk 10:25). This invitation of Christ is typified by consistent sharing and self-giving of one’s self and material wealth to others.

Consequently, the young rich man lost Christ’s offer to a great friendship, development and great adventure to be God’s fellow worker in shaping the world. He fails to see the danger of material wealth to spiritual life and true dignity. This hazard of wealth lies in the fact that the means have a subtle way of becoming ends. Indeed, “wealth can imprison a man in a world of illusion and thus develop a false sense of security. In this sense the centre of gravity moves from personality to power, and such personality shrinks in the process.”²³ Thus, the gospel becomes an enemy to the abundant life which material wealth offers.

The Law and the Gospel of Christ

The invitation to follow Christ for Mark requires self-sacrificing devotion, self-surrender and sacrificial love which cannot be achieved through the observance of the *torah* alone. This radical demand of the gospel is the litmus test of discipleship. Indeed, this is the fulfillment of the law and the prophets as set out by Jesus in Matthew 5:17. The walking away of the young man is an indication that the observance of the law only did not fulfill the demand of the gospel of sacrificial love of the new covenant and the required dignity. So, dependence on wealth and earthly desires are antithetical to the good news proffered by Christ Jesus. Thus entrance into the kingdom of God in this sense requires total self-surrender to the person of Christ. This cannot be attained through the observance of the law alone but via total dependence on God. This self-surrender to Christ brings the divine justice and love of God towards those who accept the Christ's invitation but not without suffering and persecution.

The Lesson of Mark 10:17-31 for the 21st Century

The human person of the 21st century is called to witnessing and discipleship of Christ Jesus like the Apostles, who left everything and followed Christ (Mark 10:28). He has the unique mission to continue the ministry of Jesus handed down by the apostle. As a disciple of Christ, he/she is offered like the young rich man to adopt the itinerant and simplest lifestyle of Jesus and his first followers in order to save souls and shape the world.²⁴ Accordingly, being with Jesus and sharing in his mission of teaching and healing entails the adoption of the simplest possible way of life and subordinating one's personal comfort to the mission. Thus, as a witness and disciple of Christ, he is faced with the choice of spending his life in Christ or embracing a world that celebrates material possession. In wise manner, the human person of the 21st century should make a fundamental option to witness to Christ and share in the divine blessedness of the elect.

Similarly, the rich young man's rejection of Jesus' invitation arises from his unwillingness to adopt the simple lifestyle required for the ministry of Jesus. His great love for possessions hindered him from participating in the mission of Christ. This demand of Christ's disciples is antithetical to the dependence and false security material possessions offers. The excessive craving for wealth to the detriment of the salvation of the soul will completely and totally separate one from eternal happiness. Again, the use of dubious means in acquiring wealth like fraud and robbery, selling of body parts, kidnapping, prostitution e.t.c is totally unbecoming of a Christian lifestyle laid down by the Gospel of Christ.

The imperative is to seek eternal life offered by Christ Jesus and not transient happiness offered by material wealth.

Another basic issue that this text of mark10:17-31 seeks to address is the essence of life and the source of the ultimate happiness. It completely rejects material wealth as the essence of life and the ultimate source of happiness. Also it teaches that being rich can prevent one from entering the kingdom of God. The joy and security of life is not based on what one owns but total surrender and dependence on the God the creator (luke12:15). Thus the life created by God cannot derive its true meaning and fulfillment from the created things except from the creator alone. The rich young man lost the blessedness of the spirit because he was shaded with the dark lenses of wealth. Jesus challenges the rich young man to admit that there are even greater blessings than being rich in life and playing the benefactor (Mark10:21).

Again, the text teaches that life must be lived as a gift from God and used as an instrument for pleasing God the creator. The rejection of the invitation to share his wealth with the poor and store up treasure in heaven (Mark10:21), is a pointer that the rich young man lack this basic understanding of life. This same mindset is common in the 21st century of those who take to various dubious means to amass wealth and pursue it as the ultimate goal of life. Life must not be lived in a competitive and self-centered manner but rather with the disposition to share and live for others. This Jesus did by climbing the cross. Thus, the authentic realization of the human dignity in the 21st century must entail a good disposition to sacrificial love, total dependence on God and the consistent attitude of sharing with others. This is the unique identity of the first century Christians that shaped and transformed the world. (Acts 2:45)

The text of Mark10:17-31 also teaches in vv. 28-31 that there is reward for those who take up poverty in the service of Jesus' mission of proclaiming the kingdom of God. The reward will both present and future. Indeed there is a better reward for those who accept the simple and poor life of Jesus Christ, with the promise of a new family and new possessions, and eternal life in the age to come (Mark10:30). In this sense, the person of the 21st century should live his life for eternal bliss than for transient material wealth.

Conclusion

This study critically examines the text of Mark 10:17-31 and reveals its theological functions and values on the cost of the discipleship and the use of material wealth. It argues that the ultimate goal of Christ for the rich young man is his salvation. The imperative to share his material wealth with the poor is an invitation to share in the life style of Jesus

Christ and enjoy eternal happiness. The gospel of Christ teaches that human life and material wealth should be lived and shared with others. This is essential to the authentic realization of the dignity mankind the 21st century who lives in a world that celebrates and adores material wealth, even when it is acquired via dubious means. This will help to strengthen the faith and build life style on the person of Christ who is the ultimate source of life and happiness.

Endnote

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² William Lane, 26.

³ Heinrich Rengstorf, *Theological Work in the New Testament*, Vol 2. (Germany: Kohlhammer. 1990) 157.

⁴ Henry Matthew, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*. (U.S.A: Hendrickson, 1991) 1800

⁵ Daniel Wallace, *The Basics of New Testament Syntax*. (Michigan: Grand rapids, 2000) 242.

⁶ Henry Matthew, 1800.

⁷ John Calvin, *Commentary on a harmony of the Evangelist; Matthew, Mark and Luke*.(Grand Rapids: Christian classics Ethereal Library, 1949) 1060.

⁸ William Lane, 366.

⁹ Brenkinridge Warfield, *Studies in Theology*. (Princeton: Banner of Truth Trust, 1988)15.

¹⁰ Daniel Harrington & John Donahue, *Mark*. Sacra pagina. (Minnesota: Michael Glazier Book, 2002) 302.

¹¹ Henry Matthew, 1081.

¹² Daniel Harrington & John Donahue, 303.

¹³ William Lane, 369.

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¹⁵ Halford Luccock, 806.

¹⁶ Bibleworks9: Mk 10:24

¹⁷ William Lane, 369.

¹⁸ William Lane, 371.

Frederick Grant, "The Gospel According to ST. Mark: Introduction and Exegesis" in *The Interpreter's Bible*, Vol, 7. Eds. George Arthur Buttrick, George et al.(New York: Abingdon, 1951) 808.

²⁰ William Lane, 372.

Leslie J. Hoppe, *Being Poor: A Biblical Study* (Good News Studies 20) (Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1987) 150.

²² Daniel Harrington & John Donahue, 307.

²³ Frederick Grant, 806.

²⁴ Daniel Harrington & John Donahue, 303.