

Homily based on the readings from August 18, 2026 (Ezekiel 28.1-10; Matthew 19.23-30)

The French satirist Voltaire, who could reasonably be described as the “Mark Twain of the eighteenth century,” once remarked – somewhat cynically – that “[i]n the beginning God created man in his own image, and man has been trying to repay the favor ever since.” Voltaire was mainly talking about humanity’s tendency to ascribe our own traits and characteristics to the Lord, but it is even more damaging when we falsely project the attributes of God onto *ourselves*. As we all know, this sort of arrogance was precisely what led Adam and Eve to be banished from the Garden of Eden: “when you eat of [the fruit,] your eyes will be opened and you will be *like gods*.”

This scenario has been replayed *countless* times throughout human history, with the Prophet Ezekiel denouncing one *particularly* heinous example in today’s first reading:

Because you are haughty of heart,
you say, “A god am I!
I occupy a godly throne
in the heart of the sea!” –
And yet you are a man, and not a god,
however you may think yourself like a god.

The prince of Tyre, whom Ezekiel is so forcefully chastising, was able to perform amazing deeds on account of his wisdom, his intelligence, and his riches. The problem comes when he – or anyone else – attempts to take credit *himself*, either for his abilities or his achievements. God wants us all to accomplish great and wonderful works – according to the gifts and talents he has entrusted to us – but we must never fall into the trap of perceiving them to be our *own*.

This same principle is the foundation for the well-known statement we heard in today’s Gospel: “it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for one who is rich to enter the Kingdom of God.” The

problem with being rich is not actually *possessing* money – which is neither good nor bad in itself. What makes it so difficult for a rich person to obtain salvation is the *dangerous* misconception that he can depend on his *own* wealth and power. Money only becomes an obstacle when it prevents us from placing our faith in the *Lord*. As it happens, the currency in this country is even designed to remind us of this fact – the motto inscribed on every single coin and bill *warns* us to put our trust in *God*, rather than in the power of the dollar.

When we reflect upon our own limitations – whether they be financial, physical, or emotional – it is tempting to view them as *roadblocks* to reaching our full potential. If only we had more money, or better health, or more supportive friends – imagine what we could accomplish!

Although that is a natural perspective to take, it is almost entirely *backwards*. It is when we are *weak* that we are *strong*, for *that* is when we have the opportunity to surrender ourselves *fully* to God's strength – *that* is when the power of Christ may *truly* come to dwell in each of us.

“For *men* this is impossible, but for *God* all things are possible.”