

**“Acts of Courage: Mission Possible”**

Mark 10:17-31

Twentieth Sunday After Pentecost

Pastor Peter Hanson

Christ the King Lutheran Church

October 11, 2015

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[Theme from “Mission: Impossible” plays]

Good morning and welcome everyone to this Growing in Faith Together interactive sermon. I don’t know if you recognized that song—probably most of your parents or grandparents would have... it’s from a show called *Mission: Impossible* that was on TV a long time ago, and there’s been some movies more recently, too. But the whole idea of that show was that these secret agents were asked to take on missions that were not just very, very hard, they were practically impossible.

What does the word “Impossible” mean? (some responses: can’t be done; can’t do it; no one can do it; Never been done; opposite of possible, etc.) Can you think of some things that are impossible? (

I thought up a few, too:

Sneezing with your eyes open. Impossible!

Touching your nose with your tongue. Impossible!

Tickling yourself: Impossible!

Licking your elbow: Impossible!

Writing the number “6” while you turn your foot in a circle counter-clockwise: Impossible!

Driving the Speed Limit: Impossible for some!

Running in flip-flops: Impossible!

Not waving to someone passing in another boat: Impossible!

Walking out of the barber 100% satisfied with your haircut: Impossible!

Pretty much anything NASA ever did seemed impossible until they did it.

And, one for the elders out there: It’s impossible, tell the sun to leave the sky it’s just impossible.

Here's one more, that isn't technically impossible, but is really pretty tricky. Threading a needle. I need a few volunteers to work at threading these needles can a couple of you here. You guys try threading these needles, and while you do that, we're going to read our gospel lesson from Mark 10 in the Spark story bible.

So here we heard about some different things. A man came to Jesus to ask what he had to do to have God's love forever and Jesus says follow the commandments. I have, he says. Good job, Jesus says. Now there is just one thing keeping you from really following God: so here's the one thing you need to do. Sell your things and give the money to the poor. Impossible! He said. Yes, it is impossible, Jesus said. It's as impossible as a camel going through the eye of the needle.

How are those needles coming along? Did you get it?

So it wasn't IMPOSSIBLE to thread the needle, at least not with this yarn. Good job. But now look at this needle and imagine a camel going through it. We don't have a camel to bring out here and show you but here's a picture from when my family and I saw some camels up close: do you think these camels could get through the eye of these needles? No, that's IMPOSSIBLE!

See, this rich man knew thought he knew how to love God and how to love other people. But Jesus knew that there was still ONE THING that he lacked, one thing that was keeping him back from truly loving God and loving other people. You can just imagine him saying "You want to take all of my things, all of my wealth and money, all of my possessions and given them all always, Jesus? Give away all I have, Jesus: ***That's impossible!***"

And just like that, we have a whole bunch of other things that we think are impossible to do. Like licking your elbow or keeping your eyes open when you sneeze or things like that. Now, like this man in the bible story, we start thinking to ourselves, or we even start saying out loud ***"That's impossible!"***

We can fall into this same trap that this man did—thinking not about what we can do to follow Jesus, but about what we can't do. Like, maybe we think, "You want me to tell one of my friends about God or Jesus or my church? ***That's impossible!***

Maybe Nate or Steve or Deb or I asked you to read a lesson at a worship service, or to be an usher or to help serve communion and you say to yourselves, ***That's impossible!***

You want me to sing in the choir, even though I've never been in choir before, or play my instrument even though I've only been taking lessons for a year or two, or you want me to pray **out loud** in a class or a meeting or even in worship and you say to yourself ***That's impossible!***

Or maybe with it being budget season and all, we grown-ups start talking about the ministry we are called to do in this congregation, in this neighborhood, in this community, in the world, and we start to talk about how much it might **cost** to actually do more of that ministry and we say to ourselves or to one another ***That's impossible!***

But take a look back at our story from the bible today. When we are tempted to say ***That's impossible!*** Jesus says, this **NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR GOD.**

We can tell others about God's love, about how Jesus saves us, about what fun we have when we come together in church since **NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR GOD.**

We can help out in our worship service, reading a lesson, ushering, serving communion, praying, singing, playing an instrument, even if we're not the best at doing any of those things because **NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR GOD.**

We can imagine new ways of being part of God's mission in the world, of reaching out to our neighbors, of giving ourselves away for Jesus' sake, of putting our money where our mouth is, of fully funding our vision and mission as a church because **NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR GOD.**

See, it's easy to think "I don't have a bunch of money like this guy in the story, so Jesus must not be talking to me." But Jesus is talking to us, asking us to think about that "one thing" that we lack. Jesus is talking to us, telling us that there is something that is holding each of us back from completely following Jesus, from really loving God, from truly loving our neighbor as ourselves.

It takes courage to let go of whatever it is that is holding us back in life, holding us back from following Jesus, from loving God, from loving our neighbor. But this is exactly where the impossible become possible. Because, like Jesus tells us, **NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR GOD.**

With Jesus, even our mission impossible becomes mission possible. Sure we may never be able to sneeze with our eyes open or get run in flip-flops or tickle ourselves. But in Jesus Christ, God gives us the courage to face up to the one thing we lack, whatever it is that is holding us back.

Would you join me in an Echo Prayer:? Repeat after me:

Thank you, God

For all you have given us.

Help us have grateful and generous hearts.

Give us lots of opportunities to share our things  
and give us courage to share your love

In Jesus' name we pray. AMEN.