

Home Group study: week beginning 18th May 2020

Jesus Christ: Dangerous Revolutionary

2: Is Jesus really playful?

Do you have a favourite comedian? What is it about their humour that you like?

Can humour be used to make a really serious point? Can you think of a good example?

What do you think of the idea of Jesus being 'playful', or humorous?

Read: Matthew 19: 16-26

What does the rich man's question in v16 and then his question in v18, in response to Jesus' answer, tells us about him (the rich man)? Why do you think he 'goes away sad' in v22? (*Just a thought for you: is it because as a grabbing young man he was hoping to add salvation to his bag of riches?*)

Discovery

Jesus uses this incident to teach the disciples about the difficulties of wealth. Verse 24 has given people problems for centuries, trying to work out what on earth Jesus means here. The message has been watered down by supposing there was a little gate through Jerusalem's city walls called 'The Eye of a Needle' through which a camel might just be able to crawl. Apparently there wasn't; this idea didn't come about till about 1000 AD.

Thinking about it from the point of view of Jesus' audience, can you see how the audience might think Jesus was 'having a laugh'? What sort of humour was Jesus using? (*To give you a clue, the camel, in its own way quite an amusing animal anyway, with its ungainly appearance, clumsiness and notorious bad temper, would be the biggest creature they ever saw. Conversely the eye of a needle — and Jesus would have meant literally the eye of a sewing needle — would be the smallest hole they would come across regularly.*) In the culture verse 24 would have been a very funny image. So can we discount the statement as just a joke?

Understanding

We believe the Bible to be absolutely true. But sometimes not every word in the Bible is literally true: there is a deeper truth underlying those words. The disciples were shocked, and so should we be if we take the words literally. Is Jesus saying that, as it's clearly impossible for a camel to squeeze through the eye of a needle, no-one who is rich can ever possibly get into heaven? Can that be true?

Jesus is referring specifically to the rich young man who's just walked away from the chance of eternal life. Had he reacted differently, what might have been his destiny?

Look at verse 26. How does this relate to verse 24? What hope does it give us?

This might have been 'just another story' in the Bible. Why is it so memorable and why has it been the subject of such discussion for two millennia? What does that say about the power of a humorous remark in speaking a very serious truth?

What does Jesus' humour tell us about his character?