



# PORTSOY CHURCH

## FAMILY NEWS 1/9/24

Welcome to our weekly news bulletin, keeping you up to date with the latest information on what's happening in Church life in Portsoy, Fordyce and Sandend and also giving you a digest of John's sermon for the week. It is also available on the CFN page of the Church website.

**If you know of someone in the community who isn't online and would like a copy delivered please contact John on 07941 511192.**

### *Weekly Prayer Topic*

**"Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise." Luke 3:11**

Please remember the millions of people in poverty in Britain facing cost-of-living rises that effect their ability to afford their accommodation, food, and other basic necessities, driving them in to debt, mental health and crisis. May governments bring lasting relief and justice.

**Portsoy Church Guild:** The Guild meets in the Church Centre **this Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> September at 2pm** for the first meeting of the new session. We are delighted to welcome Janet McLeman local historian who will be telling us about her work investigating the kirkyards of Aberdeenshire in a talk entitled: "God's Acres – Histories of 50 Aberdeenshire Kirkyards"

**Coffee 'n Company:** Coffee 'n Company is every Tuesday morning from 10.00am until 12 noon. Please come along and enjoy a cup of coffee or tea, scone and pancakes and a time to catch up with friends old and new.

**Monday Prayers:** Our morning prayer gathering takes place every Monday at 8.30am in the Church Centre. Everyone is welcome!

**Well Café:** Every Friday during term time from 9.15 to 11.15 providing free tea, coffee, fruit and snacks together with a play area for the children.

### **Message from John Gow**

Matthew 19: 16-24

The story we're looking at in church this week is one that's also told in the Gospels of Mark and Luke. Each version adds another layer of detail to it. All three Gospels tell us that he was rich. Matthew and Mark say he was young. Luke says that he also held a prominent position in the community. We don't know his name, but he's usually referred to as the Rich Young Ruler.

We hear of this man approaching Jesus, and he asks: "*Teacher, what good thing must I do to have eternal life?*" It's not an academic question, it's a personal one.

There's a couple of things that are worth noticing in his question. He asks about "eternal" life and the ancient Jewish people had two words for life. One meant physical life or existence. If your heart was pumping and you were breathing, you were alive. The other word described a quality of life and the Bible always uses this second word when speaking of eternal life. Eternal life isn't just about existing forever, it's about quality of life, and this quality of life comes from being connected with the source of life, with God.

And his question reveals something else too. The Rich Young Ruler thought eternal life was all about doing. "*What good thing must I do?*" he asks. And that's a common mistake. Almost every religion is

based on the premise that if we could do the right things in the right way, then we've unlocked the secret of life. Except for Christianity that is, because the Good News of Jesus is not about what we do, but what God did for us!

Jesus comes back with a question of his own. "*Why do you ask about what is good? There is only One who is good.*"

Jesus is reframing the question here. He's saying it's not about you and it's not about what good you can do. It's about God. And then Jesus points the Rich Young Ruler to God's standards. "*Keep the commandments,*" he says, and then Jesus lists some of the Ten Commandments. He mentions commandments six, seven, eight, nine, and five, and he concludes with the second of the two great commandments: love your neighbour. Jesus leaves out (and I think he does this intentionally) the first four and tenth commandments and the first of the great commandments.

Now comes the hard part. Jesus doesn't beat around the bush. "*If you want to be perfect,*" he says, "*Go, sell, your possessions and give to the poor.*" Jesus zeroes in on the missing ingredient in the man's life, which is God and contentment with His provision. That's what the other commandments talk about. You shall have no other God but me. You shall make no idols. You shall not covet. Jesus knows what's missing in the young man's life, and what's missing is a living relationship with God. He also knows that as long as a person fills his or her life with everything else there will never be room for God. If our hands are already full, we can't take hold of God's. Jesus knows this and says, "*It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.*"

Jesus is using hyperbole here, he's simply using the image of a camel going through a needle to visualise for the young man what appears to be impossible about his situation. Only with God, nothing is impossible.

It's a reminder for us all, the real issue isn't just about the size of your bank account. It's a matter of the heart. Someone can be poor and jealous and be just as enslaved to money as someone who's rich and proud. Material possessions aren't the only things that people use to try to fill the God-spot in their lives.

If we only focus on the first part of Jesus' demand, though, we miss the main part. Jesus didn't just say, "*Sell your possessions.*" He also said, "*Come, follow me.*" That's the ultimate issue. Getting rid of the junk is only half the equation. Filling our lives with heaven's treasure provides the real deal. With Jesus and with God, everything falls into place. Without them, not much else matters.