



By [Glenn CJ Byer, MA SLD](#)

In a culture where wealth was seen as a sign of God's favor it is no small wonder that the disciples were "exceedingly amazed" at the notion of it being essentially impossible for a rich person to enter the kingdom. It is important that the power of these words not be lost on us, especially in the United States of America, where wealth abounds. It is important that we not try to cover over these words by claiming them to be some sort of analogy; Jesus meant what he said. At the same time the Church presents us this reading in combination with the reading from Wisdom about wisdom. To hear the word of God and to bring it into our hearts; to be dependant upon God alone; this is wisdom. To be radically dependant upon God, this is a lesson learned more easily in want and a lesson more easily obscured by riches.

Christians do not believe that knowledge saves any more than they believe that riches show God's favor. Rather the gift of salvation that God gives to all who would embrace this deep dependence on God is based precisely on the ability to accept the need for help, the need for salvation; in a word the need for God.

The reading from Hebrews presents one of the most famous images of the word of God, and it is one that is appropriate to the message of the Gospel today: the two-edged sword. Surely this could be incorporated into the preaching of this or really any day.

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