

Mark 10:17–31

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[0 : 00] At this time, children ages 3 years old through 5th grade, and our children's workers are dismissed for their weekly program. Our scripture reading today is taken from the book of Mark, chapter 10, verses 17 to 31.

This can be found in the Pew Bibles on page 822. Again, the scripture text is Mark, chapter 10, verses 17 through 31, on page 822 of the Pew Bible.

Please stand for the reading of God's Word. And as he was sitting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

And Jesus said to him, Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments. Do not murder. Do not commit adultery. Do not steal.

Do not bear false witness. Do not defraud. Honor your father and mother. And he said to him, Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth. And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, You like one thing.

[1 : 26] Go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. And come, follow me. Disheartened by this saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God. And the disciples were amazed at his words.

But Jesus said to them again, Children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.

And they were exceedingly astonished and said to him, Then who can be saved? Jesus looked at them and said, With man it is impossible, but not with God, for all things are possible with God.

Peter began to say to him, See, we have left everything and followed you. Jesus said, Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands with persecutions and in the age to come eternal life.

[2 : 48] But many who are first will be last and the last first. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Amen. What a great day to be in God's house, to be with God's people, share in worship and great singing.

I love Holy Trinity worship. Lord, we thank you for our being here this afternoon and for your people. And may you be glorified even as you have been through the music, now through the preached word.

In Christ's name, amen. This person that we meet in today's text, and that individual has been known as the rich young ruler.

All three of the synoptics, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, record this particular fateful encounter. And from their composite picture, we get the rich young ruler label.

And look at him really confirms that that label really befits him. Look in our text on today, particularly verse 22, and it speaks about the fact that he was rich in that he had great possessions, huh?

[4 : 25] Verse 22. Luke's wording in chapter 18, verse 23 says that he was extremely rich.

He was young. So we learn from Matthew's account in chapter 19, verse 20 and 22. It is likely that he was, like many of you, under 40.

And there are a lot of people in here that are under 30, huh? Either he had done well for himself, or he had inherited a bunch from somebody.

But still, he was young and he was rich. He's a ruler. We get this from Luke chapter 18, verse 18.

And this would-be disciple, this inquirer was a ruler. It's likely at the synagogue level, because he was probably too young to be a part of the great council, the Sanhedrin.

[5 : 33] Anyway, you slice it, the dots line up. He was rich. He was young. He was a person of status and stature, huh?

By the standards of that day and hours, this young inquirer was successful. You might even say he was a poster child for success.

He was an American dream kid, huh? The kind of, that we would be personally glad to parent. And perhaps some of you here this morning, I mean this afternoon, can see yourself in his shoes.

A few after graduation, or after the graduate professional degree. You might see yourself in his shoes. Young or rich.

Young and a person of status. But wait a minute. There's more to this guy than just what we see externally.

[6 : 38] He may have had on nice clothes. He may have had on fine jewelry. But there was something else that's a part of this profile, and you and I really need to see it.

And we see this here. The attractiveness of this young man goes beyond his external kind of assets. We notice here that he was spiritually curious, huh?

Notice how he came to Jesus in verse 17. And as he was sitting on his journey, that's Jesus, A man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

Did you notice his approach was passionate and reverent? And his question was an indication of his spiritual interest.

His words were even respectful. Good teacher. He addressed Jesus respectfully, but he failed really to ponder the fact that goodness was an intrinsic characteristic of godness.

[7 : 54] An intrinsic. By nature, only God is good. His address of Jesus as good teacher may have considered the good works that Jesus was known for doing.

According to Matthew, his own question to Jesus affirmed his confusion about eternal life. This is what he said. What good deed must I do to inherit eternal life?

Matthew chapter 19 verse 17. His was a faulty view about goodness, and his was a faulty view as far as what it means to inherit life as eternal.

And again, Jesus was quick to point out that God, only God is good. Intrinsically good. Good by nature. What must I do to inherit eternal life?

Look, inheriting eternal life, do you see that in verse 17? But also, we see it at the end of our passage in verse 30, where Jesus picks up the conversation and speaks about all of these things, or are going to be the inheritance of those who follow Jesus in this day, but in the end there is going to be eternal life in the age to come.

[9 : 23] The passage is sort of booked in with this idea of eternal life. But it's also interesting in the passage that what eternal life is equated to or synonymous with.

Look at verses 23, 24, and 25, where Jesus says how difficult it is for those who have wealth, notice what it says, to enter the kingdom of God.

You see that again in verse 24 and 25. Eternal life is entering into the kingdom of God.

It's being saved. You see that in verse 26. And they were exceedingly astonished and said to him, Then who can be saved? Talking about inheriting eternal life.

Just what is eternal life? It's God life, friends. It's where the rule of God is at the center of this kind of life.

[10 : 29] And the qualities of eternal life include righteousness and justice and grace and glory and love and joy and peace.

And one cannot earn this kind of life. It has to be received as a gift. A gift from God.

Oh, I love the words. And we've sung some great hymns on this morning. But another one is Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me, that really speaks about how eternal life is a gift to be received.

Nothing in my hand I bring. Simply to thy cross I cling. Naked come to thee for dress.

Helpless look to you for grace. And I love these last words. Foul I to the fountain fly. Wash me, Savior.

[11 : 34] If you don't do it, it won't be done. Not the labors of my hands can fulfill the law's demand. Could my zeal know, respite know, could my tears forever flow, all for sin could not atone.

Thou must save. N. Thou alone. How foolish to think that the God kind of life can be earned or achieved a one.

It is a gift. Note that our passage, as I mentioned, begins and ends with eternal life. That is the heritage of those who are in right relationship with God.

Eternal life, God life, is the portion of all of those who follow Jesus. We see that in verse 30. So, not only externally, this guy has it together.

He's a person of assets, but he is also spiritually curious. But another characteristic is that he is morally acceptable.

[12 : 43] His moral track record is noticed in verses 19 and 20. And when Jesus asked him about keeping the commandments, he cited his own record.

You see that? Look at verses 20 and 21. 20. Teacher, all of these I have kept from my youth.

Ever since becoming spiritually of age, ever since, you might say, his bar mitzvah, becoming a son of the commandment, keeping the commandments, have been a part of his regimen.

And Jesus gave him the thou shalt not test. And actually what Jesus was doing, he was, if you look in Exodus chapter 20, you would see the commandments, four of the commandments that can pertain to our relationship with God.

And the other six, our relationship with one another. And you would notice here that there are six commands that he says, I did good on those. The one defraud really probably can be interpreted.

[13 : 46] He was referring to thou shalt not covet anything that is thy neighbor's. But he had successfully, at least in his own mind, had avoided the moral pitfalls of others.

His record was clean. No murder. No adultery. No stealing. No bearing false witness.

No defrauding. He hadn't coveted or stolen. He was respectable to his parents. According to the commandments relative to people, he was clean, at least in his eye.

Never a brush with the law. Never a speeding ticket. He was a good guy with a good record. Probably had come from a good home with good parents.

No cheating. No scandal. Job record clean. Respectable in the neighborhood. Perhaps like some of you, some of us here on this afternoon.

[14 : 54] Surely those were good things. Good enough, were they not? This man had not crossed the line. He had lived within the confines of the commandments. Safety was one of his core values.

Playing by the rules was how he lived his life. Surely. Jesus was going to give this guy a pat on the back. He was going to give him two thumbs up.

Not so, was it, huh? All of these I've kept from my youth up. Huh? Good job. Not from Jesus. Jesus' response was correction.

And not commendation. Rather than commending him, Jesus actually challenges him and corrects him and ends up commanding him.

You see that in verse 21. Jesus looking at him, loved him, and said to him, you lack one thing. Go sell all that you have. You're to the poor.

[15 : 50] And you'll have treasure in heaven. Huh? Had not this man inquired about eternal life? And here it was, Jesus was speaking about his inheriting treasure in heaven.

Huh? He rejects what Jesus had to say. This would-be disciple was blinded by his possessions.

They had loomed so large that he couldn't see beyond them. Huh? While it appeared that he had passed the commandments with flying colors, it was evident that he had violated the very first commandment.

Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Another way of expressing his dilemma was that his great possessions had actually possessed him.

You say, well, Pastor Jay, how do you know when possessions actually possess a person? Here's a couple of things, and perhaps you can give yourself this test.

[17 : 04] If you can't let go of your possessions, it's a good chance that they have gripped you. If you're here this afternoon and you're measuring your worth only by dollars and cents, it's a good chance that your possessions have possessed you.

If you're preoccupied with what you have, if you're miserly with your money and stingy and spend only on yourself, it's not a good sign.

Could be that you're possessed by your possessions. If you're constantly comparing and measuring what you have with what other people have, could be that you're possessed by your possessions or in danger of it.

How tragic that many of us choose the good life over the godly life, earthly treasures over heavenly treasures.

But here's something all of us need to understand this afternoon. Jesus is not in the business of cosigning our lifestyles. If they're not in accord with his kingdom purposes, and sometimes we want to do our own thing and we want Jesus just to sign off on it.

[18 : 35] No. And I think that we as believers, as Christians, particularly American Christians, we want Jesus to sort of sign off and we go on and do our thing and we still call ourselves while doing our own thing disciples of Jesus.

Huh? If your lifestyle and my lifestyle, if they're not in accord with what Jesus wants for us or his purposes for us, we need to think twice.

Well, we may be able to have the good life on our terms, and we can, you can't have the God life on your terms.

Family and friends and co-workers may be willing to sign off on it, pat us on the back, but don't expect the same thing from Jesus.

He's not a man to be flattered or impressed. He is God to be worshipped. Securing the God life, securing eternal life, is on God's terms and not ours.

[19 : 53] Huh? This rich, young man departed, crushed, disheartened, dispirited, because he possessed great possessions and reality they possessed him.

Huh? How does this image of this would-be disciple, how does that square with the kind of disciples that Jesus wants as his followers?

Huh? We've been looking at the gospel of Mark. And Mark's gospel is very much about showing that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

that's the goal from the beginning of the end of his book. But Mark also helps us to see what the Lord requires of those who follow him.

Mark and the other gospels not only are gospels, they are discipleship manuals. They are written so Christians can understand the demands of discipleship and grow in their faith.

[21 : 06] Huh? So the lessons for Jesus' disciples then and now, Mark presses those lessons home and particularly so as Jesus gets nearer to the cross.

He helps us to see what it really means to follow in the footsteps, in the footprints of Jesus. Huh? The disciples of Jesus put others first.

Chapter 9 verses 22 through 36. They honor their marital commitments, chapter 10 verses 1 through 10. They are child-sensitive and children-friendly, chapter 10 verses 13 through 16.

And like children, they are humble and they are dependent, verses 15 and 16. And they follow their master in a life of surrender.

Huh? That's what disciples do. How do we measure up to that profile? So in verses 17 through 22, we have the query of a would-be disciple, but in verses 23 through 27, we have lessons for Jesus' disciples.

[22 : 24] Huh? Jesus seized the teaching moment of this interchange between himself and this young inquirer. And notice in these verses the essence of Jesus' teaching in verses 23 through 27.

And here's the deal. What he's saying, that it's difficult for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God. He repeats that in verses 24 and 25.

Listen to what he says. And the disciples were amazed at his words which he had spoken in verse 23. How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God.

They were amazed at that. Look at verse 25. It's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. The response of Jesus' disciples is repeated.

They are amazed. They are astonished. It's impossible for the largest animal in the land, a camel, to go through the smallest opening in the land, the eye of a needle.

[23 : 31] Impossible. That's what Jesus was stressing. The disciples understood Jesus' words and they responded with yet another question in verse 26.

Then who can be saved? Who can be saved if the rich guys? And according to the standards of that day, wealth was a sign of God's favor.

And thus, the cry of the disciples in verse 26, who can be saved? It's difficult, if it's difficult for the rich who have God's favor to be saved, what about the rest of the poor folks?

So, why is it difficult for the wealthy to enter into God's kingdom? Does God have something against them?

If you've got a few dollars in the bank, huh? If you don't have to worry about them putting in money in your bank because a check might bounce, huh? Students, some are beyond those days, some of us still live in them, huh?

[24 : 44] Why wealth, friends, gives us an inflated sense of security. And a false sense of security. But doesn't it feel sort of good to put your hand in your pocket and you got a little change or got a few bills somewhere, huh?

Feels good to write a check and it won't bounce, huh? You have a nice financial portfolio or fantastic resume.

Feels pretty good, doesn't it? Huh? Beware of a false or inflated sense of security. Huh? Because wealth answers so many of life's dilemmas.

It's easy to mistake gold for God. Huh? Because wealth can get us so many things in this life. Wealth has a way of nurturing our self-sufficiency and can divert our faith or our attention from our true source of sufficiency, which is none other than Christ himself.

We're tempted to stop with the gifts and not acknowledge the giver of those gifts and honor him. Wealth also can blind us to the needs of others.

[26 : 02] The bent to gain more causes us to invest in the earthly rather than the eternal. In Jesus' words, he says, sell all and give to the poor.

The investment would be in people and not to gain more possessions. Wealth can blind us to our eternal needs, but one of these days, friends, all of us will leave this life and leave whatever it is that we have, whatever it is that we possess, we'll be left behind also.

This passage is a warning and wealth is relative, isn't it? It's a warning to all of Jesus' disciples for our perspectives and understanding about wealth.

But Jesus speaks some wonderful, liberating words in verse 27, doesn't he? He looked at them, with man it's impossible, but not with God.

For with God all things are possible. The query of a would-be disciple, verses 17 through 22, the lesson for Jesus' disciples, verses 23 through 27.

[27 : 16] And finally notice the statement of a surrendered disciple in verses 28 through 31. Peter, always quick to speak up, notice his words.

Peter began to say to him, see, we have left everything and we followed you. This guy over here, the rich guy, he said thanks but no thanks to the invitation to follow Jesus.

But Peter says we've forsaken everything, our business, our boats, they're behind us, they're all forsaken now. And Jesus' words follow Peter's words and how powerful they are.

These words along with what has preceded help us to understand what it really means to follow Jesus. following Jesus means forsaking all for Jesus, surrendering to Jesus.

What a fitting word. These guys were on the, Jesus was on his way to the cross and they were in a sense following him.

[28 : 32] But forsaking all for Jesus, following Jesus does not guarantee worldly prosperity. So we see in the verses that follow, look what Jesus says in verse 29. Truly I say to you, there's no one who has left house or brothers or sister or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and the gospel who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands with persecutions and in days to come.

Eternal life, huh? Surrender is at the heart of Christian discipleship. It is.

It's at the core. When offered treasure in heaven, heavenly riches, the rich ruler said, no, thanks. He asked Jesus about inheriting eternal life, but was unwilling to trust Jesus for it.

He asked him, but unwilling to trust him. And until you and I are ready to surrender whatever it is that he asks, we're not ready to follow the one who gave his all for us.

Faith that holds on to anything other than Jesus is not saving faith. You cannot serve God or mammon or anything else.

[30 : 11] He demands total allegiance for us. The kind of faith that is willing to leave everything and trust Jesus alone is saving faith, and such faith will not be disappointed.

Abandoning a trust in any and everything else. It means forsaking, but following Jesus also means releasing.

Releasing things and people that we treasure on earth for Jesus and the gospel. In verse 29, it means forsaking self-interest and prioritizing his interest.

Jesus spoke otherwise of this in Luke 14. Listen to what he says. He says, if anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he, listen to this, cannot be my disciple.

Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me, listen again, cannot be my disciple. Therefore, anyone of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

[31 : 30] Luke 14, 26, 27, and 33. Following Jesus means releasing. Following Jesus also means that we are candidates for receiving.

You see that in verse 30. And actually receiving more than we release because we belong to a larger family, a family of others who have released and surrendered themselves to Jesus.

What a fraternity. The family of God is to be a fraternity of surrendered people, people who forsake or surrender people who release, but also we're people who receive.

It means inheriting earthly provision and earthly challenges with persecutions. Following in Jesus' footsteps and his footprints means that you and I can be objects of ridicule and persecution and scorn.

God wow. I wonder really how we stack up our world in our culture is so soft.

[32 : 55] What if the heat gets turned up? What if it gets uncomfortable to come to a sanctuary like this and hear good music? How do we stack up?

Jesus, friends, was not simply a good philosopher with good words. Jesus comes, the Son of God, with God's message and God's agenda and we owe it to him to hear him, obey him.

Following Jesus means that we will inherit earthly challenges but it also means that we will receive eternal rewards.

That is our destiny. Eternal life is the heritage of those who follow Jesus along with these other things that are mentioned.

The journey begins, friends, with surrender to him. Oh, the last verse is a clincher, isn't it? But many who are first will be last and the last first.

[34 : 10] What a reversal. It seems like Jesus is going all the way back, or Mark is taking us all the way back, even to verse 13. Who are the first in the world?

The wealthy, the self-sufficient, the high rollers, the independent, who are the last? We see an image of them in verses 13 through 16.

Those who are childlike in their dependency and humility and poverty. They are poor in spirit and often look down upon and scorn. But the reversal is coming where the first will be last, and the last will be first.

where will you be in the reversal? Disciples who follow and trust Jesus, oh, this should give us courage to take heart and to take our lumps and to take our blows and to make our sacrifices to follow in the Prince of Jesus.

So, you really want to follow Jesus, huh? it's a journey, friends, that demand surrender and release, but it also rewards that are worth whatever it is that you and I release.

[35 : 38] Do you really believe that? The good life is really the God life. It's gilded with God and not with gold.

And how does it come? It comes through surrender to Jesus and faith in him. And the good thing is that it's available to all who put their trust in him.

Huh? You really believe that? Let's pray. Lord, help us to see and understand your demands, what these things mean for us.

I pray that you would help us to ponder them and to reflect upon them and to really live them. Oh God, we think of the great reformer Martin Luther who stood against them for the cause of the gospel persecuted because of the gospel, rejected because of the gospel.

And may his tribe increase in our day when opposition arises from every side, when the gospel message is challenged in the academy, in institutions, Lord, even theologically.

[37 : 14] Oh God, give us grace, Lord, to stand for you and to stand on the gospel of Jesus plus absolutely nothing.

Jesus alone. Lord, give us strength, Lord, as the winds begin to accelerate. Lord, in our world that is so pluralistic and so much a proponent of toleration and tolerance, I pray that you would give us the strength to be your disciples regardless of the price tag.

So, Lord God, we bless you, we honor you, and we give you the praise and help us to take a stand for you in Christ's name. Amen. Let's stand together.