

AM Mark 10:17-31 Jesus' Response to A Rich Young Man

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[0 : 00] Our reading for this morning which is from Mark chapter 10 and we're going to read from verses 17 to 31. It's found on page 1020 in the Church Bible.

Mark chapter 10 verse 17 through to verse 31 on page 1020. So Mark chapter 10 verse 17.

And as he was setting 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.

[1 : 26] 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 lack one thing. Go sell all that you have and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven.

And come, follow me. Disheartened by the 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.

[2 : 44] 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.

But many who are first, will be last, and the last first. Amen.

[4 : 24] Let us bring with me in your Bibles to that passage that we read together in Mark chapter 10, and verse 17 to 31, on page 1020.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke, as well as Mark, sorry, Matthew, and Luke, as well as Mark, all record the approach of this man to the Lord Jesus Christ.

So it's a story that's found in the three gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Matthew chapter 19, where the story is found in that gospel, tells us that he was a young man.

He was a young man. And in Luke chapter 18, we are told that he was also a ruler. All three passages inform us that he was a man of great wealth.

Mark and Matthew tell us he had great possessions. Great possessions. Luke, on the other hand, informs us that he was extremely rich.

[5 : 38] So putting the three records together, he's known as the rich young ruler. The fact that there is a threefold telling of this story in the gospels, gives us a very strong indication, that the lessons this story teaches, deserve particular attention, and should never be forgotten.

It's not just told once. It's not just told twice. But so that we might really get the message it's told to us three times.

In other words, there are lessons here that are of vital, vital importance for the salvation of our souls.

So what do we see in this history of the rich young ruler? We see three things.

We see an anxious approach. We see a loving response. And we see an astonished reaction.

[7 : 00] So let's look at the text under these three headings. An anxious approach, first of all, in Mark chapter 10 and verse 17.

And as Jesus was setting 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?

The Lord Jesus had been in the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. But he was now on his way back across the Jordan and going to Jerusalem.

And as they were on their way, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

Here was a troubled young man. There was something disturbing him. There was something troubling him, eating away at his soul.

[8 : 13] There was something that was unsettling his conscience, robbing him of peace, peace of mind, peace of heart. Now outwardly, externally, on the surface of things, he seemed to have everything.

He was well respected. He had a high rank in his society. He was a ruler. He must have lived a very comfortable life compared to most people in the land at that time because he was extremely rich with his great possessions.

We might say that he wanted for nothing. He had the whole of his life ahead of him. He was a young man.

Youth was on his side. He had an exciting future before him. The world was at his feet, as we say. And yet, he's not happy.

He's not content. He's got no peace of mind. And there's something else we should carefully note about this man. He was a good man, as far as we can tell.

[9 : 38] He was not guilty of murder. He had never committed adultery. He had not stolen anything from anybody. He had never borne false witness against his neighbour.

He had defrauded no one. He had always honoured his father and mother. So in the eyes of men, and as far as the world was concerned, this man was righteous as well as rich.

And that was a rare combination in those days, just as it is today. Here was a man who was upright. He was moral.

He was sincere, even with his great wealth and riches. But more than that, I want you to see how he approaches and comes to the Lord Jesus.

What does he do? Look at the way he comes. He kneels before Christ and he addresses the Lord Jesus with the words, good teacher.

[10 : 48] Now what a contrast that was to so many other of the rulers and leaders among the Jews at that time who treated the Lord Jesus Christ with utter contempt and scorn.

You remember what the Apostle Paul said of himself to Timothy. He said, I was a blasphemer. He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews.

He was perhaps the greatest Jewish scholar of his time among the Pharisees. And yet having been converted, many years later, looking back on his previous life, he describes himself as a blasphemer.

Because like so many of the rulers of the Jews at that time, they regarded Jesus Christ not as the Son of God who he was, but as an imposter, a false teacher, a man who profaned and blasphemed the name of God.

And regarding him in that way, they themselves were the blasphemers. But not this young, rich ruler.

[12 : 07] He approaches Jesus with a certain reverence and respect and with the recognition that he is a good teacher.

And he may have the answer that he is anxiously looking and longing to find.

What then is that question, that problem that is causing him so much anxiety and trouble? What is it that's eating away at him?

What is it that makes him want to come to Jesus in this respectful way? and not just come to Jesus, but you notice what the text says?

He's running to Jesus. He's got a problem that he is so anxious to solve. A question that he wants answered that he comes running.

[13 : 10] That speaks about the need he feels, the burden that he has. He is so keen to get that question answered, that burden removed.

He comes running. He's not dilly-dallying. He's not dragging his feet. But he comes running to Jesus. He gets down on his knees and remember this is in a public place.

But without embarrassment, without a self-consciousness, he gets down on his knees before this man. And he addresses him openly as good teacher.

Now the answer to that question is this. He is very much troubled in mind and heart about this one thing.

Eternal life. Eternal life. Because this is the heart of his question. Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life? That's his question.

[14 : 17] That's the issue that's troubling him. He is troubled and anxious and worried and concerned about eternal life. Now being a devout Jew who has professedly kept all the commandments, at least as far as the second table of the law is concerned, he would have known his Bible.

The part of the Bible that we refer to today is the Old Testament. The Old Testament was the Bible of the Jews at that time and still today. And in it there are references to eternal life or to everlasting life.

And perhaps this young man has been reading his Bible. And he's been troubled by some words that he's found in the prophecy of Daniel.

He's been reading Daniel chapter 12 and verses 2 and 3 which says, And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

And those that are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.

[15 : 51] And he realizes that these verses are speaking about the end time, the day that's coming, the day of judgment.

And they speak of a resurrection of both the just, the righteous, and the unjust, the unrighteous. And they speak about the eternal everlasting destinies of the righteous and of the wicked.

And for this young man, despite his wealth, despite his morality, despite his high social position, the thought of the day of judgment and the destinies of the righteous and the unrighteous troubled and disturbed him.

And perhaps he's thinking, how shall I rise? Will I rise with those who enjoy everlasting life? Or will I rise with those who suffer the unspeakable fate of those who endure shame and everlasting contempt?

Perhaps he had also heard a report of the words of one of Jesus' sermons. What shall it profit a man, Jesus said, if he should gain the whole world and lose his soul?

[17 : 22] Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? And this young rich ruler said to himself, what if I lose my soul?

What if my soul is lost? And I find this most interesting that here we have a young man who is anxious and concerned about such a question.

I find that interesting because you would think, wouldn't you, that young people with all their life in front of them wouldn't be troubled by such things, but so often they are.

And it's early in life. In my case I was only 15 years of age when the Lord saved me. I was troubled about these things at the age of 15.

But you would think that it would be older folk, you know, like me now, in my 60s or 70s or 80s or even 90s, as they realize that life is coming to an end, that they're not going to be the exception, that they're not going to live forever, that they would be thinking about these questions.

[18 : 35] And we'd be troubled enough, like this young man, to come running to Christ, running to church, where Christ's voice is still heard, in the scriptures read and preached.

You'd think they would be coming and flocking to the churches to hear, what must I do to inherit eternal life? But sadly, that's not the case.

That's not the case. God's love. And yet, with this young man, he was such a model citizen, so conscientious about how he lived, both in the privacy of his own home, as well as outside in the public square.

And yet, he had no peace of mind. There's a problem with him. There's a fly in the ointment of his otherwise perfect life. He has no assurance regarding the day of judgment. He is afraid. Deep down, he's petrified of what will happen to him when he dies, and he leaves all of the comforts of this life behind him to go to a lost eternity.

[19 : 47] And I believe this lay behind his anxious approach to the question, good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

let's note in the second place a loving response, verses 18 to 22 of chapter 10 of this passage.

And in these verses we see and hear the loving response of the Lord Jesus Christ to this anxious young man. And I say that because of the words that describe the Lord's response.

verse 21, did you notice this? And Jesus looking at him, fixing his eye upon him, looking directly into his eyes, loved him, it says.

Jesus loved him. could you imagine what that communication must have been like, eye to eye contact in this young man as the disciples who were witnessing it?

[21 : 05] So that Mark could record these words. They could see there was this love, there was this compassion, there was this deep concern in the heart and eye of Jesus for this young man.

The love of Jesus for this young man was full of pity and compassion. He wasn't a cold, stiff, careless man.

Jesus was full of pity and compassion. He was warm-hearted. He was tender-hearted. He loved his neighbor as himself.

And the Lord saw in him a strange mixture of seriousness on the one hand and ignorance of his true spiritual condition on the other.

Jesus saw a soul struggling with all the weaknesses of the fallen human condition. The troubled conscience that feels its need of relief.

[22 : 26] The darkened understanding that is blind to the basic principles of gospel salvation. And that thinks it can work its way into God's good books rather than receive salvation as the free and gracious gift of a God full of mercy.

And as we think about the way the Lord responded to this young man, let's always remember that Jesus feels love and compassion for the souls of the ungodly, sinful men and women, boys and girls.

Now there can be no doubt when we read the scriptures scriptures that Jesus has a special distinguishing love for those who hear his voice and follow him. They are his sheep given to him by his father and whom he watches over with special care.

They are his bride joined to him in an everlasting covenant and who are precious and dear to him. but the heart of Jesus also beats with pity and compassion and tender concern for those who like this rich young man love the world more than they love God.

I want us to remember how Jesus wept over sinful and rebellious Jerusalem, this great yet wicked city, which he says stoned the prophets and killed those sent to it by God.

[24 : 09] God's own ambassadors and messengers were stoned and killed by Jerusalem and yet, and yet, Jesus who is the same yesterday, today and forever, said he would, he would gather them just as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings when the storm comes.

He would gather them, these sinful, prophet, stoning, killing people. He would gather them, but they were not willing.

And Jesus Christ would still gather into his arms the ignorant and self-righteous, the unbelieving and impenitent, the wicked and the rebellious, if they were only willing to be gathered by him.

And that's why we may confidently tell the chief of sinners that Christ looks on them with love and compassion and that Christ offers a free and full salvation, even to the very worst of men and women, if they will only come to Christ and receive that free gift on his terms.

sinners. And so if people are lost, it's only because, it's not because, it's not because Jesus has no love for them or is ready to save them or not ready to save them.

[25 : 37] Men and women are lost. Why? Well, Christ's words supply the answer. They're lost because they love darkness instead of light.

you were not willing, he says, to come to me that you might have life. You were not willing.

You were not willing. And do we not see that revealed so clearly in this passage? It's crystal clear in this passage.

Our Lord directs the young man to the commandments. commandments. And particularly to the second table of the commandments which deals with our duties and responsibilities to our fellow men.

And you might ask, well, why does Jesus do that? Because Jesus can see what's in a man. He can see the heart, he can read the mind.

[26 : 46] Like God said through Samuel, when he was sent to anoint David as king of Israel. Man looks on the outward appearance.

We can see no more. Just the outward appearance. But God looks upon the heart. And Jesus knew what was in a man. As John's gospel teaches us. And he saw the superficiality of this young man's religion.

The trouble with this young man's religion was that it was cosmetic. It was skin deep. But Jesus could see his heart.

And by drawing out the confession of the young man in verse 20, teacher, the young man says, all these, the commandments I have kept from my youth. Well, having drawn that confession out from the young man, the Lord Jesus was going to give the young man the opportunity to put that confession to the test.

Well, prove it. Prove that you've kept the commandments. And what a very practical test Jesus' test was.

[27 : 59] He says to the young man, you lack one thing. Go, sell all that you have and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come and follow me.

Now we must understand this response from Jesus to be the litmus test of this young man's confession. That he had now, that he had, you know, obeyed the law's commandments.

Because the law is summed up in these two great commandments. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, with all your strength, and you shall love your neighbour as yourself.

Well, if so, then for the love of God and for the benefit of the poor, sell all that you have, and give the proceeds to those in need.

You say you have kept all the commandments since your youth, and you say that I am a good teacher, before whom you have run, and bowed, and knelt down.

[29 : 04] Well, I've told you that there is none good but God, the only good, the chief good, the unchangeable good. And I also offer you treasures in heaven, and a life of fellowship, a communion with God.

Then, what is holding you back from doing something so perfectly good as this? Can it be that you're not all that perfect?

Is it possible that you do not love God in the way that you think your life suggests? love God can it be the case that there is a competing love in your heart which is greater than your love to God?

Can it be true that you do not love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength after all? Now, do you see the nature of the test?

The Lord is revealing to this young man his real spiritual need of God's saving grace. He says, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

[30 : 10] That's what he had asked Jesus. And the loving response of Jesus has revealed that there is nothing he can do for he loves his wealth so much that he cannot bear to part with it even even for the winning of the eternal life for which he hungered and thirsted.

The saying was a hard saying. And the young rich ruler is totally disheartened by it according to verse 22.

And he went away full of sorrow because he had great possessions. And friends, that leads us to the third point, an astonished reaction.

And that's what verses 23 to 31 show us. I'm speaking about the reaction of the disciples who witnessed the whole incident and who heard the words of Jesus spoken following the departure of the rich young ruler from the scene.

Notice the Lord's words. words. Because the Lord's words here in verses 23 to 31 widen the application.

[31 : 36] He's not just speaking about this one person, he's speaking about everybody, including us, including us, including ourselves. He speaks first of all about those who have wealth.

And then secondly, he speaks about everyone in general. Look at verse 23. He says, how difficult will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God.

And then look at verse 24. How difficult it is. Not for those who have wealth, but generally for everyone to enter the kingdom of God.

How difficult is it to enter the kingdom of God? What is the degree of difficulty? It's impossible.

It's impossible. From a feeling of amazement, the disciples are now exceedingly astonished at what Jesus has spoken.

[32 : 55] And they ask Jesus, who then can be saved? And verse 27, Jesus says, with man it is impossible, but not with God.

for all things are possible with God. What is Jesus teaching us here? He is saying in the clearest possible terms that salvation, entering the kingdom of God, is impossible with man.

salvation, but it is not possible, but that it is possible with God.

Salvation, in other words, is impossible as far as man is concerned. And the Bible, from start to finish, teaches us this, that we cannot save ourselves. We cannot contribute to our own salvation.

salvation. We cannot even do a little bit, and cooperate with God, who will do the rest, and fill in the gaps, as it were. The Bible sums it up by saying, for by grace are you saved through faith.

[34 : 13] And this is not from yourselves. It is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one may boast. Do we all understand?

understand this basic gospel truth. For you to be saved, God must save you. It's as simple as that.

It's as simple as that. God must save you from first to last, from start to finish. For you, salvation is impossible, but it's not impossible for God to save you.

all things, even your salvation, is possible with God. So the lesson, therefore, of this passage is that we should not put any confidence whatever in ourselves, or in our own merits, or in our own efforts, to save ourselves.

we cannot keep God's law perfectly. And the commandments, if properly understood, in the light of our Lord's teaching in Matthew chapter 5, where we're shown this spiritual, inner nature of the commandments of God, they will only show us how sinful and guilty we are in the sight of God.

[35 : 42] by the law comes the knowledge of sin. That's why Jesus directed the rich young ruler to the law, in order to show him his covetous state, and the fact that he didn't love God more than he loved his wealth.

When it came to the crunch, he would reject God's offer in order to keep his great possessions, because his great possessions were his God, his idol, the thing that he worshipped above everything else.

You shall have no other gods before me, nor to an idol shall you bow the knee. But this man was prepared to have his wealth and his riches instead in the place of God, and he would bow before them and worship them.

By the law comes the knowledge of sin, and that knowledge of sin will teach us, if God blesses it to us, to despair of ever saving ourselves, and will drive us to seek salvation at the hands of a good and gracious and merciful God.

This good and gracious and merciful God sent his only begotten son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world through him.

[37 : 10] And only through him, Jesus Christ, this is the only saviour of the world, it's only through Jesus that we are saved. Whoever believes in Jesus is not condemned, but whoever does not believe, the fact is they're condemned already.

And because he has not believed in the name of the Son of God, there can be no salvation for that person. There are two different kinds of people in this world, and they're represented in this very passage.

There are those who hear the voice of Jesus say, come, follow me, but who like this young man go away sorrowful.

They cannot bear the cost of discipleship, and they go away sorrowful. But there are also those who hear the voice of Jesus say, come, follow me, and they say, Lord, we have left everything and followed you.

And my responsibility as a gospel preacher this morning is to ask every one of you, which category, two categories, which category do you fall into?

[38 : 49] Come, follow me, Jesus says, you hear his voice, are you going to go away sorrowful because you love the world and the things of this world too much to follow Jesus on his terms?

Or you hear the voice saying, come, follow me, and you say, Lord, I leave everything to follow you. Jesus once asked his disciples, do you want to go away as well?

As well as the multitudes that were turning away from Jesus at that time? And they said, Lord, to whom shall we go? you have the words of eternal life, and we have believed and have come to know that you are the Holy One of God.

Why would we leave when you're the way, the truth, and the life? May God bless his word to each and every one of us, that we might follow Jesus and be filled with his love, joy, and peace.

Let us pray. Our God and Father,