

So, You Think You're Good?

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[0 : 00] Hey, good morning. My name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana. Thank you so much for tuning in to this radio broadcast today where we are simply humbling ourselves before the Word of God and we are preaching the truth of God's Word in context because we know that that Word will set us free.

We know that God loves each of us and He wants us to be like a piece of clay in His hands that He molds and shapes more and more into His image every day.

And that's the goal of us getting into the Word of God today for ourselves. Now, I'm guessing at this point most of us are familiar with the revival that broke out on February the 8th at Asbury University in Wilmore, Kentucky, just kind of close to Lexington.

Apparently it started with these college kids after a powerful chapel service of worship music, prayer, and strong Bible preaching. And when the chapel service ended, these students didn't leave.

They stayed on their knees crying out and hungering for more of God. Their fellow students flocked back to the chapel later that day with the same heart until a full-fledged revival began.

[1 : 13] And probably about two days into this movement of God is where most of us started to see it on social media. The videos, the pictures started to emerge. And while it would be so easy to look at this with very critical eyes, and a lot of people have, I've been so impressed by everything I've seen and read from some very trustworthy sources.

Here's what I love. Even though this revival started with college students mostly between the ages of 18 and 22, it's not about lights or videos or fog machines. In fact, they've shut down every attempt for this revival to be hijacked by attention-seeking preachers, by Christian music artists looking to make it big.

They've even denied access into the chapel for these TV stations that are trying to film it. Because of godly and wise leadership, this revival has remained faceless.

And yet hundreds of thousands of lives are being affected or changed because the Holy Spirit is moving among these college students, among even those who drove from all over the country to join them, and even other colleges and churches that have had their own revivals break out.

I mean, our church has been really just excited and growing in our faith lately, and other churches around us as well. And I've loved just reading these stories of lives being radically transformed through this revival that's spreading throughout our nation.

[2 : 38] But I have to tell you, when I was on vacation two Sundays ago, I believe this would have been about 11 days into the Asbury revival, my family went to worship with my wife's parents at a small church about an hour from here in Greensburg in a tiny town called Spraytown.

And Pastor Jerry, close to 80 years old, but a great preacher, got up that morning, and he said, listen, I had a message all prepared for today, but the Holy Spirit is leading me to go in a little different direction and talk about the Asbury revival and the revival God wants in each of us.

See, this pastor, this former missionary to the Philippines, was a part of that revival that happened in that same chapel back in the 70s. And as he started to get emotional, he talked about three things that true revival must have that is based off the Word of God.

There must be a hungering for God, there must be prayer, honest, sincere prayer, and there must be true repentance. And this is what I love about this revival that happened in that chapel for about 15 days, although the impact will echo into eternity.

I love that it was simple, and it looks so much like the book of Acts, where people were cut to the heart because of their sin against God. They fell on their knees in prayer, and they cried out in repentance to a God of grace.

[3 : 57] I love how man's power and schedules disappeared as the Holy Spirit began to move in their midst. I love how it was all based off the Word of God. And listen, it was humbling to see how denominational affiliations disappeared, and thousands and thousands of Christians united in worship to a holy and majestic God.

I've even heard some Christians ask, could this be another great spiritual awakening in our country? And listen, I hope it is, as it starts with us, with you and with me in the Big C Church. So welcome back here to our series that we've been in for a while now, in the Gospel of Mark, where we're writing one of the threads that's woven throughout this God-breathed book. The thread is, what does it look like to be a disciple of Jesus Christ? And we've been answering that question for seven weeks now in this series, and I truly appreciate Pastor Mitch preaching for me two weeks ago.

And I'll just be honest, his passage was kind of the climax of this series. Everything we talked about in the first six weeks led up to Mark 8, 34, where Jesus said, whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow me.

[5 : 11] And now everything in the rest of this series, up to Easter, will flow from that radical call that each of us have on our lives to be a disciple of Christ, and not just a churchgoer, not just a quote-unquote good person.

And today we're going to look at a sad tale of a man who seemed like a great guy with a pretty relevant question, but the story ends with him walking away, choosing to forfeit his very soul to gain the things of this world.

So let's do this. Let's open up God's Word. Let's read this story in Mark 10 for ourselves. So if you would, grab your Bibles, about three-quarters of the way through your Bible, second book of the New Testament, Matthew, and then Mark, Mark 10, verse 17.

And let's talk about how a disciple approaches this call from Jesus to forsake the riches of this world to run after the heart of God. Because let's just be honest. If you're an American, according to sportofmoney.com, you are rich on a global scale.

Even the poorest among us are rich on a global scale. If you as an individual make \$60,000 a year, then you are in the top 1% of wage earners in the world.

[6 : 25] Top 1%. If you as a family make at least \$71,000 a year, you're in the top 4% in the world. So maybe as we read this story where we have this, we have this, what's the word I'm looking for?

We have this ability sometimes to try to like take a rich person and say, well, that's not me because I'm obviously not rich. But as we read this story today, I hope we can realize we're not much different than the rich young ruler because we too are rich.

Now starting in Mark 10, 17, God's word says this. As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him.

Good teacher, he asked, what must I do to inherit eternal life? Why do you call me good? Jesus answered. No one is good except God alone. And we'll explain that later.

It's a little bit confusing there. Verse 19, you know the commandments. So Jesus is setting him up here. He said, and he lists the 10 commandments. He lists what? Seven or eight of them here. He says, you shall not murder.

[7 : 26] You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not give false testimony. You shall not defraud. Honor your father and mother. Teacher, he declared, all these I have kept since I was a boy.

Jesus looked at him and loved him. I think that's like what we said when I lived in the South. Bless your heart, okay? Jesus looked at him and loved him. One thing you lack, he said, go sell everything you have and give it to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven.

Then come follow me. At this, the man's face fell. He went away sad because he had great wealth. Now, gotta be real with you here.

This is a scary story for us Americans who've bought into this comfortable American dream type of watered down Christianity that we often see. This is scary for American Christians who mainly define their faith by their membership or heritage at a church.

This is scary for you and I who are considered wealthy in the grand scheme of things. This guy who Matthew tells us was young. Luke tells us he was a ruler and Matthew, Mark, and Luke say he was extremely wealthy.

[8 : 37] This man was what we would call a good guy, okay? He wasn't this typical rich, snooty, holier-than-thou jerk that they would have had in their culture just like we have in ours.

He was the kind of guy where people might say, hey, if that guy's not getting into heaven, following all those commandments, I don't know who is. At least people who don't know the word of God. Because by all outward indicators, this guy seems sincere, moral, probably generous. He did a lot of good deeds. He appears to treat people right. He's been following these commandments and yet there's a reason he breaks all the cultural norms of his day by running to Jesus.

Did you know that a Middle Eastern man of status in that day would have never ran because it was considered shameful and humiliating? They had the long gowns that you see in the Middle East still today and they would have to lift it up and expose their legs which was considered humiliating. So they would have never have done that and yet he does that to come to Jesus. He even kneels before Christ and calls him good teacher when all the religious leaders hated Jesus and called him blasphemous.

[9 : 47] And they may have turned on this guy for saying good teacher to Jesus and kneeling before him. This guy goes against the grain because something inside of him, even though he's what we call a good guy, something inside of him knows there's something missing.

There's got to be something more than this. And I wonder if there's any of us here today who've played church maybe our whole lives and yet we still sit here empty before a God who promises to fill us with his living water.

He asks the question, what must I do to inherit eternal life? And I love how Jesus wasn't afraid to set people up to see their wrong thinking and hopefully draw them to himself.

But he starts to list the Ten Commandments, that moral code that the Israelites were given to guide them. But also the moral code that simply shows us how far we've fallen and how much we're in need of a Savior.

That's the purpose of verse 18 when Jesus says, why do you call me good? No one's good except God alone. Jesus isn't saying he isn't good or he isn't God because he's already made those claims.

[10 : 53] He's already proven it at this point. But his focus was to say to this rich young ruler and to us, listen, you're so focused on being good and what you can do that that ship has sailed.

The first time that you sinned, your attempt to be good in God's eyes is gone. No, you've not kept all these commandments like you claim to have done since you were a boy.

See, you take the first two commandments, you shall have no other gods before me and not make any graven images. And this is all about idolatry and putting other things before God. And listen, every one of us have done that at least once if not a thousand times.

Number three on the commandments, do not take the name of the Lord in vain. I'm guessing that most of us at some point have done that. Number four, remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. We've all broken that.

Number five, honor your father and mother. That one's easy. Guilty, right? Number six, do not murder. Whew, finally, one I've kept, right?

[11 : 53] Oh, wait a minute, what's Jesus saying? If you've even been angry or hated your brother or someone else, you're guilty of murder? Man, I guess I'm guilty of that one too. Number seven, do not commit adultery.

Maybe that's the first one I've kept. But hold on, Jesus reigns on our parade again. He says, if you even look at someone lustfully who's not your spouse, you've committed adultery. And we all kind of put our hand over the Ten Commandment quiz and we secretly check mark guilty on that one.

Do not steal, do not lie, do not covet. We're guilty in our sin. And this is what we have to understand before we can ever come to Jesus. Our sin separates us from a perfect and holy God who cannot stand before sin because he is that awesome in holiness.

And this is the uncomfortable crossroads Jesus brings the rich young ruler to as he has a choice to make. And maybe he has me and you there too. So let me ask you this.

And you can fill this in on your outline. And by the way, if you're looking to see the outline, you can always go to the YouVersion Bible app, Y-O-U-Version Bible app.

[13 : 00] You can download that for free. It's a great app. Put on by a great church. YouVersion Bible app. Down in the bottom right hand corner there's three lines that indicates a menu. Hit that.

Go to events. Go to First Christian Church of Greensburg, Indiana. And then you'll see our outline. But here's the first question I want to ask you today. Are you more concerned with being good or being in Christ?

I'll never forget a conversation with an older gentleman in my first full-time ministry after I left here at FCC Greensburg as an intern. He was a kind man who loved the church.

Very likable guy. He had grown up in the church all his life. And shortly after his wife passed away suddenly due to a massive stroke. It was a really tough situation.

He and I were talking. And please know I get it that in moments of trauma, moments of intense grieving, that can cause us to question and say some things. Maybe we wouldn't have otherwise.

[13:56] I get it. So I'm not looking to pick on this guy, but it was an eye-opening experience for a young pastor. I can tell you that. We were talking about the assurance Jesus gives us of heaven and how even in the midst of our pain and our tears, that one thing we could hold on to was that we would see his wife again because she belonged to Jesus just like we do.

And he said, listen, I hope so. I hope I see her again. I hope I've lived a good enough life to get to heaven. And while I was still trying to be compassionate towards a man who had a broken heart, there was another side of me on the inside that was screaming out, although I didn't say this, of course, but I was screaming out in my head, really?

You have been an elder. You have been a deacon. You have been a trustee. You've pretty much done everything in this church. You've listened to preaching for 70 some years of your life. You have heard good Bible preaching and you still think your eternity has something to do with your good deeds?

So I tried to gently speak truth into Satan's lies and he agreed with that truth. And yet, I bet you and I in moments of our weaknesses have maybe thought the same thing.

Or maybe you're here listening today and you're exploring all this God stuff. I mean, you're not a Christian, but you at least want to explore it. I'm glad you are. I'm glad you're listening. But maybe this is a shocker to you that your good deeds don't have anything to do with your salvation.

[15:19] I get it. I was raised in the same way and in an environment where we thought if you always did the right thing, if you treated others well and you worked hard to take care of your family, then God had to be pleased enough to open the gate when you came knocking.

I get it. Some of us have been immersed in this way of thinking and it's hard to change that. And yet, the scriptures show us just how amazing the grace of God can be in our lives because we all long for that salvation and that freedom that only Jesus Christ can bring.

Let me take you to a few Bible passages that help us to understand this because I don't ever want you to just take my words for it, okay? But my heart is that the Bible will always flow from this church as long as I'm the pastor.

That's always going to be the aim. That's always what we're going to do and that the Holy Spirit can have his way in each of us. So let's start here in Romans 3, verse 23 and 24.

It says, for all, so that's you and me both, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. It's a really cool picture in the Greek language that this was written in of an archery term.

[16:31] For all have sinned and basically missed the mark. We've missed the mark and because of that we are separated from God for all eternity. So for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and all are justified which is made right freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

And then we look at Ephesians 2, 8, and 9 where the Apostle Paul says, for it is by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not from yourselves.

It is the gift of God. Listen to this. Not by works because our works are like filthy rags. Not by works so that no one can boast. And then we go last here to 2 Timothy 1, 9 that says, He, Jesus, has saved us and called us to a holy life.

See, you're not saved because of your good works. You're saved by the grace of God through your faith in him. And that is what produces good works.

That's what produces a holy life. That when you are saved you will always bear fruit in Christ. So let me read this again. He has saved us and called us to a holy life.

[17:41] Not because of anything we have done. But because of his own purpose and grace. Now, as I listened to the reports coming out of the Asbury revival, these college students and beyond were seeing these scriptures like they never had before and were coming with hearts of repentance.

They weren't asking like the rich young ruler, what can I do? Do you see what his focus was? What can I do? What can I do to get my get out of hell free card? Instead, they were coming saying, Father, I know I've sinned against you.

I'm turning away from that sin. I know that I cannot earn my salvation. I am finding my identity in Christ. I know my good works are like filthy rags before you. So because of your amazing grace that you showed on the cross as you died for the sins of the world, I am coming by faith to surrender all of me to your lordship.

See, a disciple of Jesus finds their identity not in being good because we're not good, but being in Christ and letting that transform every part of how we live.

So let's look at one more question today that our passage really just demands that we answer.

What's your thing that keeps you from truly following Christ?

[18:54] What's your thing that keeps you from truly following Christ? One of many abilities that separates Jesus from us is that he could see the motivations of this rich young ruler's heart.

He could really see what was happening in this guy's heart where we cannot see that. So let's pick back up in Mark 10, 21, where this guy has just said that he followed the commandments since he was a boy.

We know that he did not because he didn't follow them perfectly. So one sin separates us. But here's what God's word says. Verse 21, Jesus looked at him and loved him.

Now, I love this because I can picture Jesus doing the same for me and for you. Now, my tendency with this rich young rulers are like, hey, dummy, you don't realize that you're lost, that you've not really kept these commandments like you think you have?

That's my response. And I'm glad I'm not God, okay? Because I'm a fallen person who needs the grace of God. But Jesus looked at him and loved him.

[19:53] So all of this is done from a motivation of love. He says, one thing you lack, go sell everything you have, give it to the poor and you'll have treasure in heaven. Then come follow me. At this, the man's face fell and he went away sad because he had great wealth.

In other words, he chose not to be a disciple of Jesus. He chose his wealth over Jesus. Then Jesus goes on to talk about how hard it can be for a rich person, for you and me, to enter the kingdom of God because of the worldly temptations that chase us constantly.

And then we pick up in verse 28 here in Mark 10. Then Peter spoke up. We've left everything to follow you. Truly I tell you, Jesus replied, no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me in the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age.

Homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields along with persecutions and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last and the last will be first.

Now, the first thing people usually ask after reading this passage is, oh, so do I have to sell everything and give it to the poor in order to be a disciple of Jesus, in order to get into heaven?

[21:10] And the answer is, maybe. If God tells you to do that, then you need to be willing to do that. See, the reason I said earlier that only Jesus can see this heart is because only Jesus could see that this guy worshiped his wealth and everything it afforded him.

That's what's going on in this guy's specific heart. Truth be told, that's what's set on the throne of his heart. That's what came first in his life before God.

And the reason we know that is because of how his heart broke over Jesus' response. And even he walked away from Jesus doing what Pastor Mitch talked about a couple weeks ago, gaining the whole world and yet forfeiting his very soul.

Now, let me tell you a story from the other end of the spectrum. When I say the word Borden, I wonder what you think of.

If you think of milk and dairy products, you're on the right page. See, in 1903, a bright young man named William Borden graduated from high school, top of his class and a millionaire.

[22:14] He was the heir to the Borden dairy fortune. Following graduation, William's gift from his parents was that he traveled the world. I don't know what you got for your graduation gift, but mine was not that, okay?

He got to travel the world. In 1903, that looked a lot different than it does today. So it took months, if not maybe a year or more to do that. As a Christian, everywhere he went, he was touched by the needs of people that he saw.

He eventually wrote his parents to announce that he would give up his fortune and position in the family business to devote his life to be a missionary. In his Bible, he then wrote these two words, no reserves.

After high school, he enrolled at Yale and he quickly became a spiritual leader on the main campus there. And he spearheaded a revival movement that led to a thousand of Yale's 1,300 students becoming involved in weekly Bible studies.

After graduating from this Ivy League school, he enrolled in seminary to study theology and to pursue his passion to be a missionary overseas. Upon receiving his degree with honors, he decided to take a one-way trip to Egypt where he would learn Arabic so he could reach Muslims with the gospel.

[23 : 30] Leaving all his fortune behind, he set sail. On the way, he wrote two more words in his Bible. Remember the first two, no reserves. Now he wrote, no retreats.

He arrived in Egypt full of anticipation and immersed himself in learning the language. But sadly, within days of being there, he became very sick, very weak.

And soon he was diagnosed with spinal meningitis. A short time later, William Whiting Borden died at the young age of 25. Human logic can never understand his death.

Yet an ocean away, hundreds if not thousands were impacted because of his joyful, willing sacrifice. During the last days of his life, and in labored handwriting, he penned two more words in his Bible.

No reserves, no retreats, and now no regrets. He gave it all up to be a disciple of Jesus and follow the Lord wherever he would lead.

[24 : 32] So what a contrast to the rich young ruler, right? As we answer this question for ourselves, do I have a thing, whatever that thing may be for me, that keeps me from truly following Christ?

Is there something else on the throne of my heart? Or is Jesus in his rightful place? Because listen, Jesus is a jealous God. God is a jealous God, and he will not compete.

He has to be number one, or he has no place at all. See, following Christ is a radical denial of the world system of doing things, and yet so often we've been led to believe that it's just about praying a prayer, or getting dunked in the water, or attending a service at least once a month.

And yet Jesus says, listen, if you want to be my disciple, you have to deny self, even die to self, pick up your cross, and follow me. And there's no better place to be as we too join in with William Borden, and we say, no reserves, no retreats, no regrets.

Listen, I have no idea what that thing may be for you. I have a hard enough time chasing after my own heart that's kind of prone to wander. Maybe like this guy in this story, your thing is wealth and status, maybe fine living, and if you're honest with yourself, it comes before Jesus, and you're not willing to give it up.

[25 : 52] Maybe it's this pursuit of more power, or greater title, or more clients. Clients, maybe it's the party scene that you're in love with that comes before Jesus, or your public persona, or your spiritual laziness.

Maybe it's a feeling sorry for yourself, or it's control, like power and control, or lust, or gossip. Now, I've gotten the ball rolling, but Satan's lies and attacks come in many forms, many more forms than that.

But regardless of what that thing is for each of us, the bigger question is this. Are we going to lay it down at the Savior's feet and follow Him?

Or will we too walk away, maybe still religious, but walk away forfeiting our very soul for the things of this world? Man, this is tough.

This is tough. And my heart is very convicted right now too. But I love that when people who were at this Asbury revival, they spoke about it. One common denominator was repentance.

[26 : 57] Turning away from that sin. Fully surrendering everything to the Lordship of Christ. Jesus, you can have the things of this world because they don't satisfy me anyways. Anything that gets in the way of me following you and waving that white flag of surrender, Jesus, it's yours and my life will be found.

My identity will be found in you. And I love Hebrews 12, 1 and 2. It says, therefore, and this is the call that we have.

Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us do this. Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.

For the joy set before him, he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and he sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Now, I have a feeling that both of us don't want to gain the whole world and forfeit our very souls.

We want this amazing reward both on this earth and in eternal paradise with him. So here's what I want us to see from today's passage. Here is the take home.

[28 : 08] Kind of like when you go to a good restaurant and you love your your food, but there's too much for you to eat. So you take it home and man, you devour that thing later. I hope you'll chew on this for a while. Here's what I want you to see.

A disciple of Jesus sees the wickedness of their own heart and comes all in to lay that sin at the foot of the cross as we follow Jesus faithfully.

Pray with me. Heavenly Father, thank you. Thank you for your words of life that you have spoken over us today. And I don't want to ever be like this rich young ruler, this guy who was seen as very religious, following all the religious rules.

And yet he was lost because he refused to make you the only Lord of his life. And that's sad. And I don't want to be that.

I know no one listening to my words right now want to be that person either. So help us. Help us to surrender everything to your Lordship, to have a heart of repentance before you and to live our lives, making you the Lord of our life where we are fully committed to you, following your Holy Spirit, following the word of God everywhere you lead us.

[29 : 27] So thank you for your truth today. Thank you for speaking it into us. We pray this in Jesus name. Amen. Let me give you this quick invitation. If you're listening to this today and you'd like to talk about surrendering your heart to Jesus, maybe just have some faith questions, reach out.

My name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana. You can email me at ray at FCCGreensburg.com or call at 812-663-8488.

Hey, God bless you. Have a great week.