

Eternal life

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Date: 01 January 2023

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[0 : 00] Good morning. Good morning to those on Zoom as well. My name is Bo, I'm one of the elders. Happy New Year as well.

This morning, we are going to go to a story of a young man who is not that happy after all. We will see why. Initially, the title of the sermon was The Failure of Success.

Then, as I prepared the sermon in detail, I realized that not many of us consider ourselves successful, but the sermon is relevant to all of us.

And the bigger picture is we are looking at the idea, the concept of eternal life. And so I changed the title to Eternal Life.

Let's pray first before we start. Almighty God, we thank you for this new year and the hope that we have ahead of us because of you.

[1 : 09] We want to see the Lord Jesus Christ as we go into your words this morning. May you teach us your ways. Thank you, Lord. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

So we will be reading from the book of Mark, chapter 10, verses 17 to 22. So for this first part of the sermon, this one I will read from Mark 10, 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?

So in this reading, we come across a man who runs after Jesus and kneels before him in front of everybody else.

So we can see that Mark is trying to tell us, someone who is quite desperate and also genuine, wanting to know something, to learn something.

[2 : 15] And also the fact that he kneels before Jesus is showing his great respect for Jesus and addresses Jesus as his teacher, and he wants to know what he can do to gain eternal life.

I think this man would have observed Jesus for quite some time, I mean, for him to do that, to trust that Jesus would be able to tell him what to do to gain eternal life.

And also, Telstra says this man would have been searching for the answer for quite some time. So he's desperate, because he couldn't find it elsewhere. He might have asked many people, but he just couldn't see it from anyone.

But somehow, he knew that, he knows that Jesus knows the answer. Unlike the religious leaders of his days, who thought Jesus was a deceiver, because of the way Jesus handled Sabbath or other topics, this man understands that Jesus has something he has been looking for.

This man also thinks that the secret of eternal life is closely guarded by Jesus and his followers. He therefore kneels before Jesus publicly, hoping that Jesus would see his sincerity and tell him the secret.

[3 : 47] And who is this man? From the help of the other Gospels, Matthew and Luke, we can gather that this man is young, maybe in his 20s, that he is younger than Jesus.

He is also wealthy and in a position of power. And he's usually referred to as a rich young ruler. So this man has everything everyone in the world would like to have.

Youth, power, wealth. So we know that when we are young, we usually do not have power or wealth to enjoy life.

And then as we get older, we are too busy trying to gain wealth and power and don't have time to enjoy life. And when we get quite old, even if we have gained enough power and wealth, we become physically too weak to enjoy life.

So that is the problem of life. And this man has everything. He's got power, he's got wealth, he's got youth on his side. What more does he want? Why is he not happy?

[4 : 58] In the sense that he's quite desperate. Desperate. He wants to learn something important. We can see that his soul is restless.

The same as our souls, we are restless. We are always looking for something to satisfy our souls. We think that strength, wealth, or being in a position of power would satisfy our souls. We envy someone who is more successful than us, thinking that we will be happier if we are just as successful. This rich young ruler is telling us that he has been there and his soul remains restless. His success brings him a sense of emptiness. In the sense that you already have what everybody is looking for. What next? It doesn't satisfy. What else can he do for his life? It's also like a Christmas toy that a child has been looking forward to.

[6 : 03] But finding it no longer enjoyable the day after Boxing Day. You get what you look for every year after year, and then you don't enjoy it anymore. Even if you do enjoy it for a long time, the thing will not last anyway.

Everything breaks down eventually. So this young man also knows that he is going to die one day. Then what? He sees Jesus living a restful life, despite having no wealth or position. And he also knows that Jesus is not a fool. I mean, if we don't think much about life, we just go easy for everything. But he knows that Jesus is the wisest man he has ever met. Because when Jesus teaches, he teaches as someone who knows what he is talking about. And he teaches with authority. And when Jesus faces opposition, he remains calm and composed. Jesus does not flatter or belittle someone in his interaction with people. He does not need to flatter someone to gain respect, or belittle someone to feel better on himself.

[7 : 17] So Jesus just has a life that is very different. A life that is superior to his life, at least in quality, and most likely in quantity as well.

So this young man seeking for life is not only long-lasting, but also meaningful. This morning, on the first day of a new year, I wonder what we are seeking for this year.

A better job? A spouse? A family? I mean, these are all important things in life. But this young man wants more.

He wants eternal life. Because he knows that without eternal life, all other things in life are not meaningful at the end. And without eternal life, it's just like going through Christmas every day without your loved one.

And it's just, there's no basis for us to enjoy anything in life. If you do have eternal life, will you seek, if you do not have eternal life, will you seek it today?

[8 : 32] If you already have eternal life, will you seek something bigger than yourself this year? Yeah. We continue with the story.

Mark 10, verse 18a, the first part of it. And Jesus said to him, Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.

It seems that Jesus was not, he's not answering the young man's question about how to inherit eternal life. But goodness is very important.

If the young man does not understand what goodness is, he will not understand what eternal life is. And that's why Jesus had to first of all deal with this question about goodness first.

How many times we use the word good every day? We say good morning, good girl, good boy. He's good at sports or say I'm good.

[9 : 35] What do we mean by good? It's just there could be many meanings. And what does this young man mean when he calls Jesus as a good teacher?

Does he mean Jesus is a competent teacher? Does he mean Jesus is a helpful teacher? Or does he mean Jesus is a godly teacher? So there are many meanings in the word good.

But when we say someone is a good person, we usually mean that that person gives us what we want. So for example, a father may tell a boy, a good boy, when the boy obeys his instruction to take the rubbish out, then the father feels happy and so there's a good boy.

Or a teenager who went to borrow the car from the father and the father lent him the car for whatever reason and he said this is a good father.

And so that is how we usually use the word good. And we think that a government is a good government if it fulfills our wishes. We also think that someone is good if it makes other people happy, like a sports person, a movie star because they entertain people and they're doing a good job and so we can see just recently the last two days the news about so and so died after how

many years.

[11:07] They're all in entertainment or fashion design and those are considered good people because they contributed to the society and this is how we use the word good.

and the young men would also think that he himself is a good person because he had kept God's laws. But when he sees Jesus he sense that Jesus' goodness is different to his.

Just like the Pharisees, to the Pharisees Jesus did not appear to be a good person because he does the work of healing on Sabbath day he breaks the Sabbath law to the Pharisees.

To this young man Jesus' goodness seemed to be above the law. Do you see that the laws are there to restrain and to train bad people?

If we are inherently good God does not need to give any law for us to live by. Just like if we are all considerate drivers we don't need to have all those road laws.

[12:23] We would be careful and we would not drink and drive all those things. So the laws are there just because we are not good.

God and we usually do good because we want to gain something. We want to be respected or we want to avoid punishment.

We want to get a reward. Jesus does good because he is good. Jesus does not do good to exchange for something. He does good simply because he is good.

and that is the goodness of God. And you may think that when you spend time with someone who is inherently good, you will enjoy his company.

The truth is that someone who is inherently good will most likely offend us or threaten us. Jesus' goodness threatens so many people that they rejected him and killed him.

[13:30] When I was a teenager, I joined, I wasn't a Christian there. I joined Red Cross Youth Cadet Group. The group leader was a Christian and the only Christian that I ever met.

And he was there's a bunch of us who are quite stupid and young under him.

and this leader was stern. He would not tolerate unruly behavior. But he was also kind to each of us. So he treated us with respect.

Some other leaders label him as a holy, holy person, jokingly behind his back. So that's why, you see, because he's got that goodness that we didn't have.

There are people who would not tolerate him. but some of us were attracted and I was attracted by his goodness that I didn't have.

[14:35] And so I asked him why. Then he explained why he had what Jesus.

And he told me about Jesus dying for our sins when we were being unkind towards God. And that's how I became a Christian eventually. what is eternal life?

In John 17:3, Jesus said, and this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ only have saints.

When we know God through Jesus Christ and become part of his goodness, that is eternal life. In the presence of goodness, evil cannot last forever and evil cannot be enjoyable.

Jesus wants this young man to realize that he is talking to the good God and that he cannot inherit eternal life without first being part of God's goodness.

[15:37] Because God's goodness will not tolerate him in his state of badness or evil. And that's why Jesus first of all mentioned about goodness.

Hopefully we can also understand that. we continue with Mark 10, 18b until 21. So Jesus said, you know the commandments.

Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not bear false witness, do not defraud, honour your father and mother. And he said to him, teacher, all this I have kept from my youth.

And Jesus looking at him, loved him, 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.

one of the expressions of goodness is love. Keeping the commandment does not necessarily mean that a person has love for God or for his neighbours.

[16:49] love. In 1 Corinthians chapter 13 verse 3 it says, if I give away all I have and if I deliver up my body to be burned but have not love, I gain nothing.

So love doing all the commandments does not mean that we have this love. However, for someone who has love, he will automatically leave out the commandments.

Jesus is love. Jesus does not keep the commandments. He leaves the commandments. That is the difference. Goodness is exclusive.

It does not tolerate what is not good. Love, likewise, does not tolerate what is not good. Looking at this young man, Jesus loves him.

Jesus says only God is good. But Jesus also sees some goodness in this young man. What is the goodness that Jesus sees in this young man?

[17 : 57] One of the things that I think Jesus loves is this young man's curiosity. This young man wants to know more about life. All of us are born with curiosity.

We want to learn. We want to know. A wise parent or teacher knows how to help a child to develop his curiosity. Unfortunately, in our society, most of us grew up in a work for external reward system. We study hard or work hard mostly because we want to be better than other people or to get recognition for our hard work. Not so much because we want to know.

We want to know more about this situation. world that God created. We want to know more about life. And that is part of the thing that God created in us.

Curiosity to know to grow. So besides curiosity, Jesus also loved this young man's desire for meaning in life. We may not know how to define a meaningful life, but the Bible defines it as a life of glory, honor, and immortality.

[19 : 16] That is in Romans 2.7. To those who by patience in well doing, seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. God created us for glory, honor, and immortality.

And that is also eternal life. Eternal life is not only everlasting, but also a life that is glorious and honorable. honorable. We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

We live a life that we are ashamed of. We would if we think about it, that our life is neither glorious or honorable at the end.

This young man knows that something is missing in his life, despite him keeping the commandments, despite his wealth, despite his position.

glory and honor in Jesus' life. He decides what Jesus has, and Jesus loves him for that. But Jesus does not love this young man's love for money.

[20 : 24] Jesus says that we cannot serve God and money at the same time. When we love money, it implies that we think with our own achievement, we can give ourselves glory and honor.

God loves what he has made in us, but God does not love what we have made for ourselves. Jesus loved this young man.

God's love is not sentimental. It is a love that does not tolerate what is not good in a person. Jesus told this young man to do a difficult thing, to replace the love of money with the love of God.

God loves God. God loves love to be all inclusive. God's love is exclusive. God loves exclusively what is good.

While God does not love what is not good, God does not just sit there resenting what is not good. God does something to change what is not good into what is good.

[21 : 31] He sent Jesus to the world. How do we know Jesus has eternal life? Because Jesus is good and because Jesus has love that loves what is good.

We come to Mark 10, 22, possibly one of the saddest words in the Bible. Dishardened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

this young man has seen Jesus' glory and honor. He also knows that his own achievements do not satisfy and do not last long.

He knows that there is no eternal life in money, but money can give him identity. That is, he is a rich person, he is a successful person.

Money can give him security, where he can live for a long time in comfort because of money, and money can give him pleasure. He can afford many entertainments.

[22 : 43] If Jesus lets him keep his money, he would have no problem following Jesus immediately, I think. Even if Jesus let him keep half of his money, I think he would still consider following Jesus.

After all, with his money, he can support Jesus' mission as well. he just could not give up all his possessions. It's too much for him to give up.

He didn't understand why Jesus wants him to give up everything. So he walks away sorrowfully. In a way, I'm glad that he walks away in sorrow and not in anger.

If you have run after Jesus and kneeled before him in front of many people, and if Jesus implies that keeping the commandments will give you eternal life, and now Jesus says there is still one more thing to do, and this one more thing is for you to give all you have to the poor, how will you feel?

You have worked hard to get your wealth. Those people have done nothing to deserve your wealth. Would you not think that this is most unfair? When you walk away in anger instead of in sorrow, but this young man walk away in sorrow, that shows that he believes what Jesus tells him is true, but the cost of eternal life is too high, he cannot give up all that he has.

[24 : 13] Over the years, I have seen many patients with liver disease because of alcohol. So, no one wants to die of liver disease. It's a painful death.

I told them if they wanted to live longer, they needed to give up alcohol and start to live a healthier lifestyle. Not many people could give up alcohol easily.

A lot of people would say, yeah, I will do it, but they never do it. After a few months, you do their blood test, their liver function is still as bad, or it's not worse.

And some who try to cut down, they will cut down, I will just drink a little bit. But they couldn't either, because once they start drinking a little bit, they couldn't stop. They just keep drinking.

And some already knew they couldn't do it, so they could only walk away in sorrow, because there is the dilemma. I can't give up alcohol, I must drink it.

[25 : 20] I know that it's going to kill me, but I still drink it. I know you cannot, but do you want to?

If they want to, I can help them. They have medication, they can help people to extend for alcohol. But some people just didn't ask for help, and they just walk away.

The deadly problem of being successful is that we become self-sufficient and self-reliant in society in general. Because successful people are so used to be admired and followed, they tend to think that if they cannot solve a problem, no one else can.

Many of us, when we look back to our younger days, we might have many regrets, because we did not seek advice from people who have more experience than us, or we did not listen to their advice, the many things that we decide in life.

When we are young, we thought that we knew everything. This young man has made his first step of seeking advice from someone who he respected as a good teacher.

[26 : 38] He cannot make one more step to ask for help. He does not need to walk away in sorrow. He just needs to admit that he needs help to give up all he has.

If this young man seeks further help from Jesus and sticks with Jesus, he will soon find out that to be with Jesus is eternal life. He will find out that someone who has eternal life will overflow with goodness and love.

He will find out that someone who has eternal life can give all he has to help people who do not deserve any help. He will find out that the more he gives away, the more he is full and he will find rest.

Today, Jesus' answer to anyone who seeks eternal life is the same. Give up your dependence on anything that gives you glory and honour in the world and follow me.

We are more privileged than this young man because we live on this side of the cross and know that God has given us his own son to die for our sins. And if he has given us his own son, will he not give us all things along with him?

[27 : 55] Let us pray. Oh, Father God, we are so thankful for this life that we have in Christ.

Father, we want to live this life worthy of calling in this year 2023. Help us to do so. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.