

Two Meetings with Jesus

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Date: 15 September 2019

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[0 : 00] Mark chapter 10, the passage we read together there, we read two accounts of meetings with Jesus. The children brought along by their parents and the rich young man who came running.

The children were brought along by their parents because they wanted them to receive a touch from Jesus. It brought them to Jesus that he might touch them, that he might bless them.

Proverbs 10, 22 reminds us, the blessing of the Lord makes rich and has no sorrow with it. So they were wise to bring their children to Jesus because it's a wonderful thing to know the touch of Jesus on your life for good. Indeed, we all want that for our children, don't we? We want them to know that blessing that the gospel brings, that they should be members of his family, that the children come to me, Jesus said, do not hinder them, for to such belong the children of God. Then there's a rich young man. Luke tells us he was a ruler, so he's a rich young ruler and he comes running. Now rulers were respectable folk. They didn't run. They remembered their dignity. They walked, but this man was in a hurry to speak to Jesus. And he had an important question, a good question. What must I do to inherit eternal life? Sadly, he didn't like the answer when it came. So we've got these two meetings with Jesus. And one shows us how we must approach Jesus. And the other shows us how not to come to Jesus.

Jesus. The children came to Jesus properly. The rich young ruler came to Jesus. And he didn't stay. He didn't come properly. So I want to think about these two meetings with Jesus this morning.

You picture the scene. Crowds of people there. Always crowds of people when Jesus was teaching. Beginning of chapter 10, we're told, crowds gathered to him again. In among the crowds were ordinary folk.

[2 : 22] And there were people who thought themselves important. The Pharisees. And they were asking all sorts of difficult questions. It would have been a busy scene. A busy time.

Verse 9 of our chapter, which we didn't read, told us that Jesus had gone into a house. And they, they, they, they, um, verse 10 rather, told us Jesus had gone into a house.

And, um, it would have been busy there too. There would have been people jamming the doors. The rooms were being packed. Everyone trying to listen to Jesus. And along come these parents with their little children.

And they would have had to push the way to try and get in, wouldn't they? but the disciples, they thought, what are they doing here?

They can't understand what's happening. They don't know what's going on. Don't trouble the master with children. But Jesus, he sees what's going on and he's indignant.

[3 : 29] Verse 14, he's indignant. Let the children come to me. Do not hinder them. Those wonderful words of Jesus. Let them come, for to such belong.

The kingdom of God. And he takes them in his arms and blesses them. What a wonderful thing, eh? We all long to feel the touch of Jesus' hand, don't we?

The touch of the Saviour's hand. But Jesus goes on and teaches something more here. In verse 15, he says, Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.

So, here are the children coming. And Jesus said, To them belong the children of God. And then he puts it wider. He makes it fit all of us. He says, He who doesn't come to me, or she who doesn't come to me, as a little child, will not enter the kingdom of God.

What does Jesus mean? By the kingdom of God? Well, we thought about this a couple of weeks ago. It's that sphere where God rules as king.

[4 : 44] Entering the kingdom of God is becoming a subject of the king of kings. It's receiving eternal life. If you turn back in your Bibles to chapter 9, and look at verse 45, Jesus is talking about temptations to sin.

And he says, If your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. And then in verse 47, he says, If your eye causes you to sin, tear it out.

It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell. So, entering the kingdom of God is the same as entering life.

And it's the opposite of being thrown into hell. It is, in fact, being saved. Coming to know Jesus as Savior.

Jesus said, This is eternal life. That they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. So, to enter the kingdom of God, to know eternal life, we must become like little children.

[6 : 03] Now, the confidence, trustfulness of a little child, this is, this is, this is, this is part of it.

We, we can only enter the kingdom of God if, like London there, we're willing to stake our all on what Jesus has done. just like a child can do for its parents.

But there's more here than this. There's more here than this. Little children are small and helpless. And receiving the kingdom of God as a child is to allow yourself to be given it.

Because you know you cannot claim it as a right or attempt to earn it on your own. you cannot do it. You have to allow yourself to be given it as a gift.

We come after all with empty hands. We cannot buy it or earn or merit salvation. By grace are you saved and not of yourselves.

[7 : 15] It is the gift of God. So grace by definition is a gift undeserved and free. And entering the kingdom of God as a child is allowing God to give you his salvation as a gift without any claim to deserving it.

We come with empty hands don't we? We come with empty hands or hands dirty with sin. We continue with empty hands. We have nothing nothing to offer as we live the Christian life.

Sometimes we can think that while we're saved by grace we continue by works by what we do but not so. Everything in the Christian life is of grace undeserved and whatever we do for Jesus we are always unprofitable servants just doing our duty always empty hands.

So we receive the gift of God the gift of eternal life. We enter the kingdom of God as a pauper with empty hands of a little child.

So what do we learn of Jesus here? Well we see something of his tenderness. We see him take the little children in his arms and bless them. We learn that he welcomes the weak those who have nothing to offer and he gives out of his fullness.

[8 : 39] Isn't that wonderful? Well I'm so glad that that's true because I have nothing to offer but Jesus takes those who are weak and he offers himself. That verse I've just quoted this is eternal life that they may know you the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

Eternal life in him to know Jesus the most wonderful thing in the world. To have your sins forgiven because Jesus bore them on the cross. To have freedom to approach the throne of grace in prayer.

To have confidence that we're friends of the King of Kings. Confidence that the enmity between us and God has been removed because Jesus has died.

All this to those who come with confidence and with the weakness of a little child. What a wonderful thing it is to know Jesus as our Saviour.

Do we rejoice in it as we should? Do we? Would someone coming in among us be left wondering why are these Christians so calm, so joyful even in suffering?

[9 : 51] How come? What is it that makes them the way they are? Would they see it among us? Would they? Someone asked if you were accused of being a Christian would there be enough evidence to convict you?

Would they? You? Me? Enough evidence to convict us? Jesus accepts the weak and welcomes them into his kingdom.

Those who come with confidence and with empty hands. Those who leave aside their sin and come to him. Now let's look at the rich young ruler.

He comes running as we said and he wasn't remembering his dignity that day. He was a religious man. We know he's a religious man because he reckoned he had kept all the commandments all his life.

But he wanted to know what more should I do? What must I do? He felt he had already done quite a lot to be able to say to Jesus I've kept all the commandments since I was a boy.

[11 : 11] That's quite a claim isn't it? Not many of us would say that. But he wasn't satisfied. He didn't know he'd done enough and you never do. If you think you're earning your salvation you never know when you've done enough.

That's the trouble about trying to earn your salvation. But we know that we don't earn our salvation. We know that no one is righteous not even one.

This young man he had forgotten or perhaps he'd never realized that sin begins in the heart. That as Jesus had taught in Matthew 5 it's not just the outward action it's the inward thought adultery committed committed in the heart covetousness committed in the heart and mind murder beginning in the heart with anger.

These sins would certainly have been there with this young man. But Jesus went straight to the great reservation to the idol that he had in his life and it was his money.

money. The real love of this man's heart was his money and when Jesus said to him go and sell all you have and give to the poor and come and follow me he was asking him to give up his idol and put Jesus first.

[12 : 37] While the idol of his money was on the throne he wasn't going to ever make Jesus king of his life. Impossible. So Jesus lays his finger on the one thing that's going to hold him back.

Ah but he's a rich man and his riches meant more to him than the salvation of his soul. And he turns away sorrowful. He was sorry because he wanted to know that he was saved.

He wanted to inherit eternal life but he didn't want to give up his money. He didn't want to come and follow Jesus. So this young man he chose the easy life here.

He chose his money over his eternal soul. What a terrible bad decision that is. What a terrible bad decision.

Jim Elliot the missionary to the Amazon he was martyred there but over 50 years ago now. He said he is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.

[13 : 55] He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose. We cannot keep the things of this world.

A lot of money or a little money or whatever we cannot keep them. We will leave them one day but we cannot lose eternal life in Jesus Christ.

We cannot lose it because he gives it to us freely and without price he gives us eternal life when we come to him.

So to choose Christ at whatever cost is not folly it is wisdom. It's a wise thing to do whatever is costing us but to reject Christ to gain something in this world is folly.

And Jesus looked at this young man and loved him even though he knew what was in his heart. I think that's a wonderful statement. Jesus looked at him and loved him.

[14 : 59] Jesus wanted better things for him. He wanted him to follow him. He wanted him to know eternal life. But the young man didn't come.

He didn't come. He went away sorrowful. Thinking about this young man's reactions reminded me of that other couple of parables that Jesus told where he told of a man who found treasure in a field and he went out and he sold everything he had to buy the field to get that treasure.

It was the thing he wanted. It was worth more than everything he had. And the other man who found a pearl of great value and he too sold and spent all his money so he could buy that one pearl.

The pearl of great price. The treasure in the field. Both parables were Jesus' way of teaching us that to know him, the kingdom of God, to know him is the one thing of supreme value.

Nothing, nothing should hold us back from that. To lose everything and to have that pearl is a good exchange.

[16 : 20] Nothing in this world equals knowing Jesus. And as we've seen, to enter the kingdom of God is to accept God's rule in your life, to live for him.

it is to be saved, it is to know Christ, it is to belong to him. Now we can't buy our salvation. When Jesus told this young man to sell all he have and give it away, he wasn't telling him that he could buy salvation.

He was telling him to remove the idol from his throne and to come and make Christ king. And the same way when finding the pearl of great price, giving up everything, we're not earning salvation.

Because salvation is of grace. This is Jesus' way of teaching us that to know him is the most valuable thing in all the world, the thing that surpasses everything else.

So, what does it profit a man, what does it profit this young man? To gain the whole world and forfeit his life, it's folly. A terrible bad decision by this young man here.

[17 : 31] So, the kingdom of God is like that pearl of great price, more valuable than anything else. Come, follow me, Jesus said. Come, walk with me. Come, leave your idols, whatever they be, leave your sins, whatever they be, and come and follow me.

Did this young man come back? Jesus loved him, we know that, but we don't know that he came back. We don't know that he changed his mind. What a terrible thing, eh?

To meet with the Son of God, to be invited to follow him and to say no, and then one day to wake up in a lost eternity.

What a terrible thing. What a terrible thing. Jesus said, how hard then? He said, when this young man walked away, he said, how hard, how difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God.

The disciples are amazed. They say, well, how can anybody be saved then? You see, in those days, wealth was seen as a blessing from God. So rich people were blessed by God.

[18 : 44] And then Jesus sharpened even that saying. He said, how hard it is for anyone to enter the kingdom of God. How difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God.

Not just the wealthy but all. He says, it's easier for the camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to go to get into the kingdom of God.

Well, it's impossible, isn't it? Impossible for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. We cannot do it. The rich young ruler, moral young man, anxious about his soul, he turned away.

It cannot be done. But with God, all things are possible. Jesus said, it's possible. With man it is impossible, but not with God.

For with God, all things are possible. We know it's possible. We know it's possible because Jesus died. Because of today's memory verse, for God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

[19 : 57] That's why it's possible. That's why it's possible. God gave Jesus that we might be saved to pay the price for our sins.

And we come, we come to Jesus with empty hands and receive the free gift. So we've got these two encounters with Jesus.

Children who come empty handed to receive his salvation. The rich young ruler who thinks he has something to give, his works, his keeping of the commandments.

But Jesus said, no, you must give all that up, give up all your money too, and follow me, follow me. And this is a challenge of course that faces us all.

The gospel that we have to announce to those around us, are we willing to give up all our pretenses of righteousness, of good works, to turn from our sins, and to follow Jesus.

[21 : 12] You know, Jesus, here we see that he welcomes those who come with empty hands, like the little children. He doesn't ask us to make ourselves better, or earn our salvation.

No, come just as you are, he said, and be welcome. Secondly, he's a loving saviour. He cradled the infants in his arms and blessed them.

He loved the young man, even though the young man refused to follow him. He's the one who says, come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me.

He's a loving saviour. And thirdly, he demands first place in our hearts. He will not, we cannot come to him trusting in something else as well as him.

Our own efforts, our money, we cannot come to him holding on to our sin. We have to commit ourselves totally to Jesus.

[22 : 13] Like that man who was willing to climb onto Blondin's back and be carried across the Niagara Falls. That's the kind of commitment it is.

Total commitment. If Blondin fell, he fell. Happily, Blondin didn't fall. It's only when we realise that we can do nothing to save ourselves and that Jesus has done everything we need, it is then that God is able to save us and welcome us into his family.

Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy cross I cling. Naked, come to thee for dress, helpless, look to thee for grace, fowl eye to the fountain fly, wash me saviour, or I die.

And when we come like that, we're welcomed, ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven, brought into the family of God and made members of the kingdom of God.

And that's what we want our neighbours to know, that's what we hope we can introduce to those who come along next week to the family fun day, that they might be attracted to and say what is it that makes these Christians different.

[23 : 29] Two encounters with Jesus, the child who accepts the gift, the religious man who wants to work his way to God and refuses to put Jesus first.

May God bless his word to our hearts. May God help us to make this gospel known to those around us. May God bless his word to us today.

Let's pray. Father, thank you for your word. Thank you for that pearl of great price love to know Jesus and to know eternal life in him.

Father, thank you for that. We pray that, Lord, you will help us to renew in us, Lord, the wonder of your salvation, the wonder of your gospel, that we might be those who will tell it out to our neighbours and our friends and that we might live it, Lord, day by day here in Livingston and West Lothian and Edinburgh and wherever we go.

Lord, bless your word to our hearts, we pray today. Write it on us, on our hearts, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. I'm going to sing in Psalm 65 now and sing Psalms.

[25 : 00] Psalm 65, it's on page 82. I'm going to sing verses 1 to 5. In Zion praise awaits you, Lord, to you our vows we'll pay, to you all people will come near, you hear us when we pray.

Let's stand and sing Psalm 65, 1 to 5.