

Mark 10:1-31

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[0 : 0 0] Well, when I was a teenager, I went on a seven-day backpacking trip to Garibaldi Provincial Park near Whistler. To get to our base camp, we needed to hike 10 kilometers from the parking lot along a steep, winding path, climbing 820 meters.

Not that anyone was counting. That's four times longer than the grouse grind, and nearly three times the elevation gain. So we trekked through the steep forest trail for over four hours, through 17 switchbacks, with all of our supplies for the week on our backs.

And that was just to get to the campsite. We went in the middle of summer, when it should have been warm and sunny and beautiful. But it wasn't.

As we ascended the trail, we entered the clouds, and it became foggy, drizzly, damp, and miserable.

We arrived at our destination, which was supposed to overlook this stunning alpine lake. But because of the fog, we couldn't see anything.

[1 : 1 5] And it stayed this way for the first three days. One evening, as I was eating my dehydrated mashed potato soup with tepid water slopped on top, our leader came running, and he said, Guys, come to the lake!

So we went quickly to the lakefront, and the clouds had broken. And we saw a complete rainbow coming out and then back down into this massive, pristine green lake that we could now see for the first time, and was surrounded by mountain peaks.

It was breathtaking. Easily the single most beautiful scene I've ever seen in my life. And as I think about that trip, I don't remember how hard the hike was, or the rain, or my heavy backpack, or even the fog.

I remember the view. I remember perfectly the unimaginable, breathtaking beauty of the destination. And I long to see it again.

Today, in Mark 10, we learn how to follow Jesus. And we learn what the way of discipleship demands of us. In Mark 8, verse 34, Jesus said, Sounds terrible, doesn't it?

[2 : 5 0] That sounds way worse than my hike. Why would anyone choose to follow Jesus if the path will require such suffering?

Constantly denying yourself and lowering yourself to serve others. What could possibly make following Jesus worth it if this is what the journey entails?

That's the question our text answers. But it doesn't answer it until the very end. That's our destination. It's our summit. But to get there, we need to hike through 31 steep verses.

In our text, Jesus speaks on how to follow him in three areas of life that all of us would probably rather he didn't talk about. And after he's led us through this difficult journey, he reveals to us what awaits those who trust in him.

We generally boil down following Jesus to a simple checklist. Pray when you think to. Read your Bible periodically. Go to church when you can. Be nice and be good.

[3 : 5 6] Jesus teaches in Mark 10 that following him requires an absolute commitment. It requires handing over every aspect of your entire life to him in submission and surrender.

It means in response to God's mercy, presenting yourself as a living sacrifice. And today, Jesus tells us how to follow him.

With first, our sexuality. Second, our attitude to others. And thirdly, with our money. Jesus gets real in Mark 10.

There is no beating around the bush. There is nowhere for the preacher or the hearer to hide. Believe me, I've looked. If you want to know what Jesus calls you to, it's here.

It's radical. It's costly. But if you follow him, it will lead you to unspeakable treasure and eternal life. So first, how to follow Jesus with your sexuality.

[5 : 08] Look at verse 1. Jesus left there, that is Capernaum, his headquarters. And he went now to the region of Judea, beyond the Jordan. And crowds gathered to him again.

And again, as was his custom, he taught them. We join Jesus on the road in Mark 10, where he's just crossed into Judea for the first time in Mark's gospel. And so in verse 2, having just entered King Herod's jurisdiction, the Pharisees come up in order to test him.

And they ask, is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife? The Pharisees are asking about divorce to try and trap Jesus, to try and get him to speak against King Herod's marriage, just like John the Baptist did in chapter 6.

They want Jesus to get in trouble with the king, just like John. But Jesus doesn't take the bait. Instead, he uses the opportunity to affirm from Scripture that human sexuality is a divine creation, and human marriage is a divine work.

Jesus points us back to the very beginning of Scripture, Genesis 1 and 2, to show God's original intent in human sexuality and marriage. Jesus quotes Genesis 1, verse 27, in verse 6, when he says, from the very beginning of creation, God made them male and female.

[6 : 33] Jesus affirms what Scripture says, that human sexuality, and human gender for that matter, is a divine creation. Jesus goes on, therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.

That's quoting Genesis 2. See, Jesus looks to Scripture for guidance on how to live. And so should we. God's word reveals to us God's will.

It shows us how to follow Jesus. And then Jesus adds his own teaching in verse 9. He says, What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.

Human marriage is a divine work. God is the one who joins a man and a woman in marriage. John Stott writes, Marriage is not merely a human contract, but a divine yoke.

Back at the house, the disciples point out that Jesus never answered the Pharisees' question about divorce. So he tells his followers plainly in verse 10. Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her.

[7 : 45] And if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery. This is a hard teaching. For many of us, it leaves us feeling completely condemned of the decisions we have made or the ones that others have made for us.

It sounds like Jesus is saying that remarriage is never an option for a person who's divorced. So what are we to do with this text? And how does it show us how to follow Jesus with our sexuality? Few things to briefly note. First, when Jesus is asked about divorce, he talks about marriage, casting a biblical vision for what marriage is meant to be.

He tells us that human sexuality is a divine creation and human marriage is a divine ordinance. So to follow Jesus, rather than seeking legal loopholes to get divorced, we should instead commit to our marriages.

We should strive to deny ourselves in our marriages, recognizing that we have been joined to our spouse by God. To follow Jesus, we should commit to become the least and the lowest in our marriages, to take the posture of a servant and live to constantly serve our spouse.

[9 : 10] Couples should submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. So husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

As Jesus gave his life to love and serve and save his people, so husbands should daily give our lives for our wives. And wives, in the same way, submit to your husbands.

See, the vision of a holy matrimony is a marriage defined by mutual service, mutual self-denial and submission to love and serve and build up the other.

Second thing to note, divorce is an undesirable end to what was intended to be a lifelong covenant. Divorce is not at all what God intended for us.

However, because of human sin, sometimes marriages die. And sometimes, because of the hardness of the human heart, divorce is permissible.

[10 : 25] Jesus' overarching principle is that marriage is supposed to be for life. But because of the reality of sin, we see in certain texts of Scripture that there can be permission in very specific circumstances for divorce.

In the Old Testament, the law does make some concessions for divorce. And so too, you see in the New Testament, specific concessions are given for divorce and remarriage. So, looking to Scripture and following its precedent, I believe that there are cases of abuse or neglect or abandonment or violence or unfaithfulness that can and perhaps sometimes should lead to divorce and sometimes also to remarriage.

This is a sad reality of our fallen world and our hard-heartedness. If you are here this morning divorced or preparing to be, I want you to hear that Jesus has come for you.

He has come to give you good news of great joy. He's come to lavish you with his grace and invite you to follow him. He calls you and loves you and has died to forgive you all your sin.

He's come for all of us to heal all our brokenness. And so you are invited if you are divorced to become a beloved member of our community of sinners saved by his grace, following him unto his kingdom.

[12:02] Now what about if you're single? How do you follow Jesus with your sexuality? Well, in short, you deny yourself too. You also seek to live following Jesus in the context that he's put you in.

This doesn't mean you never marry, but it does mean that your top priority should be following him, whether you get married or not. There are many single people here who are an integral part of our fellowship and who are committed to this family of faith and who bless us uniquely because they are single.

They are denying themselves to follow Jesus and they should be commended and praised for their example of faithfulness and service. That's part one.

This is like ten minutes into a hike when you're completely out of breath and you want to just turn around and go back to the car and go home. But hang in there. It's worth it for the view at the end, okay?

Part two. How do we follow Jesus in how we treat others? Look at verse 13. People are bringing children to Jesus that he might touch them and the disciples rebuke him, them.

[13:18] But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant. That word, indignant, is a strong word. It means absolutely fuming mad, furious.

It's the only time it's used to describe Jesus in the entire Gospels. Think about that. This situation makes Jesus more angry than anything else.

He says to his disciples, let the children come to me. Do not hinder them for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly I say to you, paraphrase, listen up.

Whoever doesn't receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it. And he took the children in his arms and he blessed them, laying his hands on them. In the story before this one with the Pharisees and the story coming right after with the rich young ruler, religious people come to Jesus thinking that they can obey the law to earn God's favor.

They think that their religiosity will save them, that God is indebted to them because of their religious righteousness. Jesus teaches here that it's all grace.

[14:35] We must approach God with the posture of a child, completely defenseless, completely vulnerable, completely desperate and needy in order to receive God's grace.

If we think we can earn God's favor or behave in a certain way so that he's obligated to bless us, we've totally missed what the gospel is all about.

We don't follow Jesus to earn our salvation. We follow Jesus joyfully because we're gripped by his gospel of grace. We cannot believe what God has done for us.

The unimaginably generous, undeserved gift of grace he has given us. We approach him as a child with nothing to offer and we receive from him eternal life.

And so we follow him because of what he's done for us. This must be our attitude. Whoever doesn't receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.

[15:41] I've found in my own children that they are a very powerful tool God uses to disciple me. My kids are needy.

and they are exhausting. Young children can't really do anything without your help. They often don't listen. They constantly hurt themselves when they're not hurting each other.

They get into trouble all the time. And yet the greatest joy of my life is to be with them. My children have taught me more about myself than anyone else ever has.

They have shown me in uncomfortable clarity how sinful I am. How selfish. How proud. How fragile.

They show me how distracted I am from the things that actually matter to focus on things that don't. They've shown me how lazy I can be.

[16:48] How weak. They reveal every single one of your idols and they hold them up to you in stark relief. And then they love you unwaveringly anyway.

They're a tool of discipleship unlike anything I've ever experienced. They reveal my sin and they image God's grace. God ministers to me through my kids.

Through them I see him. And through serving them I catch the faintest glimpse of the unimaginably gracious ways that God serves me. My children reveal to me who I am and the posture I should have when I come to Jesus.

The beautiful old hymn called Rock of Ages that articulates it so well when it says nothing in my hand I bring simply to the cross I cling naked come to thee for dress helpless look to thee for grace foul I to the fountain fly wash me savior or I die.

Whoever doesn't receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it. We come to God as filthy fallen broken empty sinners in need of his constant saving cleansing healing and filling.

[18:05] We come as crying newborn babies come to their mother for that first embrace. And the way God receives us and serves us and saves us is how we ought to receive others.

We live to serve even the least especially the least in fact. We must love our neighbors no matter who they are or how beneath us we feel they might be.

To follow Jesus we are called to deny ourselves to love children as Christ loves children. We seek to serve the least and the lowest around us that they might see Jesus' kingdom of grace established in us and they might follow us as we lead them to our king and our God.

We're called to follow Jesus with our sexuality and our marriages. We're now called to follow Jesus with our posture to children and to the least and lowest amongst us remembering we come to Christ like children in need of his grace.

And lastly we're nearly there. We have done the hardest part. We follow Jesus with our wealth.

Verse 17 a rich young religious leader runs up and kneels before Jesus.

[19:22] Note the enthusiasm of the youthful vim and vigor. Good teacher he says what must I do to inherit eternal life? That's the question isn't it?

This is what the members of Come and See were contemplating as our course finished this week. What hope do I have for the future? How do I inherit eternal life?

Jesus takes the young man through the St. John's Catechism course starting with the Ten Commandments. Do not murder, do not commit adultery, don't steal, don't bear false witness, don't defraud, honor your father and mother.

The young man from his knees says teacher all these I have kept from my youth. And Jesus looking at him loved him. That word is agape.

It's the deepest kind of love. It's divine love. It expresses the love God and only God is capable of giving. Jesus looks at this man and he loves him as God loves him.

[20:26] And he says to him one thing you lack, go and sell all that you have and give it to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven. and then come and follow me.

Disheartened by the saying the young man went away sorrowful for he had great possessions. This is the point of this difficult story.

If you would inherit eternal life then nothing, not anything can be of more value to you than Jesus. This man was not willing to give up his wealth. His possessions had his heart. They were his God and he would not and could not give them up for Christ.

This man thought he could earn God's salvation by keeping all the rules. His righteousness he thought could make God indebted to him and compel God to give him eternal life. Jesus shows him that what God wants is our hearts and this young man despite being an upstanding citizen was in love with his wealth more than with God.

[21:34] He kept the rules to receive the reward but he did not love God. Jesus isn't saying here that his followers can't own any personal property. There are countless examples of the disciples owning things including Peter having a house which is mentioned in verse 10 of our text.

Rather Jesus is saying that nothing can be of more important to you than him. following him must be your top priority and for this young zealous man he could not give up his idol of wealth and so he could not follow Jesus.

Jesus reflects on how difficult it is for the wealthy to enter the kingdom of heaven and the reason is simple. Our wealth enslaves us. Our wealth becomes our master.

wealth has a unique power over us that few can escape from and it inevitably leads us down a road away from Jesus and his kingdom.

You cannot serve both Jesus and money. And the only way to break the power of our wealth over us is to give it away. Financial generosity is a powerful spiritual discipline because it breaks the power of our possessions over us and it shows that we're not living for our current comfort or security but rather to glorify God and invest in his kingdom.

[23 : 01] Giving money away is a powerful counter-cultural act of worship and that's why it's an essential part of all of our worship services. Okay at the end of our climb following Jesus through Mark 10 we're finally approaching the destination and as we're nearly there Jesus turns around on the path and he says in verse 25 how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of heaven.

It's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God. Now at this point in the text I tend to agree. Who on earth could follow Jesus if this is what's required?

The disciples ask the question all of us are now asking in verse 26. Then who can be saved? Jesus answers with man it's impossible but not with God for all things are possible with God.

Listen again to what Jesus says here. We finish with this. It is impossible for any person to get into the kingdom of God on their own merit. It is impossible for any person to save themselves.

that's the answer to the rich young man's root question. How do I inherit eternal life? The answer is you can't. Not by your own effort. It's impossible.

[24 : 28] But now the gospel. Now the good news. Now the summit of our text that we have slugged up the mountain of Mark 10 to reach. It's impossible for a person to save themselves.

But it is possible for God. God can save you. You may have come this morning completely broken. Lost in darkness. Enslaved to sin. Completely beyond all human help. But what is impossible for man is possible for God.

God's son has come not to be served but but to serve. And to give his life as a ransom for many. God has done all that needs to be done to secure your salvation.

Receive God's gift of salvation given in his son. Believe in him. Receive his grace like a child and now joyfully follow him. Trust in him and his words.

[25 : 33] Follow his teaching and you will inherit eternal life. There is our destination. That is why it is worth following Jesus.

Because he and only he can save you. And if you believe and come to him he will save you. And lead you to eternal life in the kingdom of God.

Thanks be to God. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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