

Mark 10:1-31 (PM)

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Date: 29 January 2023

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- [0 : 01] Well, when I was a teenager, I went on a seven-day backpacking expedition to Garibaldi Provincial Park near Whistler. Has anyone here been to Garibaldi Provincial Park?
- Wow, lots of us. We should do a service there in the summer. Well, before we make plans, to get to the base camp for the week, you need to do a 10-kilometer hike from the parking lot up a steep, winding path that climbs up 820 meters.
- Not that anyone was counting. So, just to compare, that's four times longer than the grouse grind, and it's three times the elevation. Wow is right.
- We trekked through the steep forest trail for over four hours, through 17 switchbacks, with all of our supplies on our backs for the week.
- And that was just to get to our campsite. We went in the middle of summer, when it should have been warm, sunny, beautiful. But it wasn't.
- [1 : 09] As we ascended the trail, we entered clouds. It became foggy, and drizzly, and damp, and miserable. So, we arrived at our destination, which was supposed to overlook this stunning alpine lake.
- But because of the fog, we couldn't see anything. And it stayed this way for the first three days. One evening, in the fog, I was eating my dehydrated mashed potato dinner, with tepid water poured on top.
- When our leader came running to us and said, Guys, come to the lake. So, we went quickly to the lakefront, and what we saw is the clouds had broken.
- And there was a complete rainbow that came out, and up, and then back down, and in, to this massive, pristine, green lake that we now could see for the first time, that was surrounded by mountain peaks.
- It was completely breathtaking. It was easily the single most beautiful scene I have ever looked at. And now, as I think about that trip, I don't remember how hard the hike was, or the rain, my heavy backpack, or even the fog.
- [2 : 32] What I remember is that view. I remember perfectly the unimaginable, breathtaking beauty of my destination. And I long to see it again.
- Today, in Mark 10, we learn how to follow Jesus. And we will hear what the way of discipleship demands of us. In Mark 8, verse 34, Jesus said, If anyone would come after me, let them deny themselves, carry their cross, and follow me.
- That sounds terrible, doesn't it? That sounds way worse than my hike. Why would anyone choose to follow Jesus if this is what the path will require?
- Constantly denying yourself, lowering yourself to serve others, suffering all the time? What could possibly make following Jesus worth it? If this is what the journey entails?
- Well, that question, our passage, is going to answer at the very end, at our destination, our summit. But to get there, we need to hike through 31 steep verses first.
- [3 : 46] In our text, Jesus speaks on how to follow him in three areas of all of our lives that we 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 following Jesus down to a simple checklist.

Pray when you think to, read your Bible periodically, go to church when you can, be nice, be good. Jesus teaches in Mark 10 that following him requires an absolute commitment.

It requires handing over every aspect of your life to him in submission and surrender. It means, in response to God's mercy, presenting yourself as a living sacrifice.

Today, Jesus tells us how to follow him with first, our sexuality, second, our attitude to others, and thirdly, with our money.

[4 : 51] Jesus gets real in Mark 10. There is no beating around the bush in this text. There is nowhere for the preacher or the hearer to hide.

Believe me, I have 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. 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.

And again, as was his custom, he taught them. We join Jesus on the road in Mark 10, and he's just crossed into Judea for the first time in Mark's gospel.

In verse 2, having 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?

[5 : 57] Now, the Pharisees are asking about divorce to try and trap Jesus, to try and get him to speak against King Herod's message, marriage, just like John the Baptist did in chapter 6.

The Pharisees want Jesus to get in trouble with the king, just like John did. But Jesus does not 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.

He quotes Genesis 1, verse 27, in verse 6, when he says, from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. So Jesus affirms what Scripture says, that human sexuality, and human gender for that matter, is a divine creation.

He goes on in verse 7, therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. That's quoting Genesis 2.

[7 : 13] So Jesus looks to Scripture for guidance on how to live, and so should we. God's word reveals God's will. It shows us how to follow Jesus.

Jesus adds his own teaching in verse 9. He says, whatever therefore God has joined together, let not man separate. See, human marriage is a divine work.

It is God who joins a man and a woman together in marriage. John Stott writes, marriage is not merely a human contract. It's 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 9, whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her.

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.

[8 : 25] It sounds like Jesus is saying that remarriage is never an option for a person who is divorced. So what are we to do with this text?

And how does it show us how to follow Jesus with our sexuality? A few things you need 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.

Human sexuality is a divine creation. Human marriage is a divine ordinance. So to follow Jesus, rather than looking for legal loopholes to get divorced, we should instead be committing to our marriages.

We should strive to deny ourselves in our marriages, recognizing that we've 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 constantly to serve our spouse.

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.

[9 : 48] As Jesus gave his life to 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 holy matrimony is a marriage that's 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, sometimes because of sin, marriages do die.

And sometimes, because of the hardness of the human heart, divorce is permissible. Jesus' overarching principle is that marriage ought to be for life.

[10 : 53] 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 law, there's some concessions for divorce, and so too you see in the New Testament. There are specific concessions for divorce and remarriage.

So if you look to Scripture and you follow its precedent, I believe 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 He loves you and He has died to forgive you all your sin.

[12 : 11] 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 God's grace, following Jesus unto His kingdom.

Now what about if you're single? How do you follow Jesus with your sexuality? Well in short, you deny yourself too. You seek to live following Jesus in the context you are in.

It doesn't mean you can never marry, but rather 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 they 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 the part of the hike where you're 10 minutes in and you're completely out of breath and you want to just fall over and die and you think I would rather just go back to the car and go home.

- [13 : 31] This is a terrible idea. Let's not do this. Hang in there everyone. It's worth it. Trust me. The view is amazing at the top. That was the hardest part. 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 them. 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 in the Gospels to describe Jesus.

This situation makes Jesus more angry than anything else in all the Gospels. 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 that means listen up. Whoever doesn't receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.

- [14 : 41] 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 asking about divorce and the story after with the rich young ruler we have religious people who come to Jesus thinking that if they obey God's law they can earn God's favor.

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

We must approach God with the posture of a child completely defenseless completely vulnerable completely desperate and needy.

That needs to be our posture to receive God's grace. If we think we can earn God's favor or behave a certain way so that God's obligated to bless us we've totally missed what his gospel is all about.

See 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 in his son.

- [15 : 57] It's unimaginably generous. It's an undeserved gift of grace he gives us. We've approached him as a child with nothing to offer and we've received 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.

I've found in my own life children are a powerful tool God has used to disciple me. I have two kids they're seven and five and they are needy.

They are exhausting. Young children can't really do anything without help. They often don't listen and they're often either hurting themselves or 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.

- [17 : 12] They've 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 actually don't. They've shown me how lazy I can be.

How weak. They reveal every single one of your idols and they hold them up 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 immeasurably gracious ways that God serves me.

[18:14] Children reveal to us who we are and the posture we should have when we come to Jesus. The beautiful old hymn called Rock of Ages and it 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 too 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 saving cleansing healing and filling 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 deny ourselves we 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 called to follow Jesus with our posture to children and to the least and lowest amongst us and lastly nearly there we follow Jesus with our wealth verse 17 a rich young religious leader runs up and kneels before Jesus note the enthusiasm the youthful vim and vigor runs up kneels down good teacher what must I do to inherit eternal life well that's the question isn't it this is what the members of that come and see group 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 a catechism course starting with the ten commandments don't murder don't commit adultery yada yada yada the young man from his knees says yep teacher all these I've kept from my youth Jesus looking at him loved him that word is agape it's the deepest kind of love it's God's love the way God loves and only God is capable of loving Jesus loves this young man as God loves him and he says to him one thing you lack go sell all that you have and give it to the poor and then 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 we would inherit eternal life then nothing not anything can be of more value to you than

Jesus this man was not able to give up his wealth his possessions had his heart they were his God and he would 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 not make God indebted to him and compel God to give him eternal life but Jesus shows him that what God wants is our hearts despite this young man being an upstanding citizen he was in love with his wealth more than with God he kept the rules to receive the reward but he didn't love God Jesus is not saying here that his followers can't own personal property there are countless accounts of 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 more important to you than him following him must take the top priority over everything else 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 money becomes our master wealth has this unique power over us that few can escape from it inevitably leads us down a road that goes away from Jesus and his kingdom you cannot serve both God 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 our possessions have over us and it shows we're not living for our current comfort or security but rather to glorify God and invest in his kingdom giving money away is a powerful countercultural act of worship and that's why it's an essential part of all of our worship services at the end of our climb following Jesus through Mark 10 and finally approaching our destination Jesus now says this in verse 35 25 sorry how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God 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 and at this point in our text surely like me you tend to agree with Jesus who on earth can follow Jesus if this is what's expected the disciples ask the question all of us are now asking in verse 26 then who can be saved and

[24 : 58] Jesus answers in verse 27 with man it is impossible but not with God 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 any impossible for any person to save themselves in your life it may be impossible for you to navigate how to be righteous with your sexuality or with your current marriage might be impossible to think how do I serve people or blow me I hate children I can't do that that wasn't me talking that was you just so we're clear I love my kids this is being recorded you may think in that rich young ruler it's impossible to follow Jesus in Vancouver and not be concerned about wealth Jesus answers the rich man's question how do

I inherit eternal life and he says you can't not by your own effort it's impossible but now the gospel now the good news now the summit of our text that we have slogged 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 evening 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 to serve and to give his life as a ransom to save many God has done all that needs to be done to secure your salvation so receive God's gift of salvation given in his son believe in him receive his grace like a child and joyfully follow him trust in him and his words follow his teaching and you will inherit eternal life there is our destination and that's why it's worth following Jesus because he and only he can save you and if you believe and come to him he will save you and he will lead you to eternal life in the kingdom of God thanks be to God

Amen and and and and and and and