

Mark 10:17

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[0 : 00] I'd like us to turn this morning to God's Word in the New Testament, in the Gospel of Mark, and chapter 10.

Gospel of Mark, chapter 10, and reading at verse 17. And as he was setting out on his journey, a young man or a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life? In the Gospel of Mark, the Lord here is setting out on his last journey to Jerusalem.

And half this Gospel is taken up with that journey. If we were to look back through the earlier chapters, we would find that the Lord began his journey in Bethsaida.

And then he goes away up to Tyre and Sidon, Caesarea Philippi. From there he comes back down again to Mount Hermon, the Mount of Transfiguration, and to Capernaum.

[1 : 58] And it's as he's on that journey and setting out early in the morning, that this young man comes up and faces him.

A man ran up to him and knelt down before him and asked, Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

The Gospel of Matthew gives us a slightly different inference about this question. It says, Teacher, Teacher, Teacher, Teacher, Teacher, Teacher, Teacher, Teacher, What good thing must I do to inherit eternal life?

What is it that I have to do to earn eternal life? Now Matthew calls him rich, Luke calls him a ruler, and Mark here calls him a young man or a man.

And so that's why we have learned to call him the rich young ruler. By the world's criteria, he seemed to have everything going for him.

[3 : 19] He was still young, he was rich, and he was a ruler. Whether he was a prince in Israel, that means a member of the Sanhedrin, whether he was a prince of the judiciary, or whether he was even a prince of the realm, we don't know.

All we know is that by his claims of character, that he's not immoral, he's not irreverent, he's not ungodly, he's a model of mankind.

No Kirk's Christian in the land would prevent him from becoming a communican member of the church. He comes with what appears to be the right question.

He comes as one who is concerned, one who is respectful, or even prayerful as he kneels before the Lord.

But as the narrative shows us, he had no more intention of doing what was necessary for eternal life than any of the Pharisees amongst whom perhaps he mixed.

[4 : 55] And so, here's a young man who's concerned about his soul, so it appears. So concerned that he comes running to Christ.

Here's something that he feels he can do, and the Lord will tell him what he can do that he might get eternal life. He's looking for some sort of statement from the Lord, a statement which will describe to him the path he must lead, the life he must enter onto, that he might follow the Lord, and earn this eternal life that is set before him.

And so Christ says to him, you ask me, what good thing you must do, and you know.

you know the commandments, so you know what you must do if you want to earn eternal life. And the commandments are very clear and very plain.

You know the commandments. Do not murder. Do not commit adultery. Do not steal. Do not bear false witness. Do not defraud.

[6 : 21] Honor your father and your mother. The Lord seems to be going in a progression from the least difficult to keep to the most difficult.

He's leading this man along a path where his conscience is being awakened. No, he does not murder. No, he does not steal, commit adultery, bear false witness or defraud.

Does none of these things. And so he asks the question that we saw in Matthew. I've done all these things.

What yet do I lack? And so the Lord exposes him in society, even as the gospel exposes our insincerity as we profess to follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

Immediately it appears that the rich young ruler doesn't know the meaning of what he's professing. He says all these things have I done or kept from my youth.

[7 : 36] I know the commandments have been instructed in the commandments and I've done them all. Perhaps many of us have been brought up in that same way. Brought up in the church, taken to Sunday school, perhaps learn the catechisms, know what the commandments are in a superficial way.

We keep them and we think that's all that's required of us. That's all we need to be known as Christians and to be on the right way, on the way to heaven. But in asking the question, as I said, the rich young ruler is looking for an answer to an academic question.

which commandments? which commandments? You remember on one occasion the Lord has a conversation with the Pharisee and he asks the same question and he says, keep the commandments.

What are the commandments? He said. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength and your neighbor as yourself and to provaricate the Pharisee says and who is my neighbor?

The Lord shows to him you are the neighbor. The Lord is saying exactly the same thing here to this rich young ruler. You are the man who needs to be a good neighbor.

[9 : 03] You are the man who needs to be a good son. You are the man who needs to be a good citizen and if you would be perfect even as your father in heaven is perfect go and do these things and keep these things.

What the Lord is trying to show this young man to enlighten his mind into is that he knows what he has to do and so in order to evade the call to obey the commandments he is signifying not a disregard but he is signifying there a lack of knowledge as to what the commandments really are. The call to discipleship is a call to obedience. Those who would believe must first obey. come unto me all you who are heavy laden and I will give you rest.

If you obey that command you will be on the right road to believing. If you will not come to Christ you will never be on the right path to faith.

and so the Lord says well if what you say is right if you say you've kept all these commandments if you say that you lack nothing he says if what you say is true well he says go sell all that you have all that you have all that you're so proud of all that you boast in go and give it away give it to the poor and come and follow me.

[11 : 41] And you'll have riches in abundance in time and the treasures of heaven and the life to come.

that will prove your neighbour is important as yourself. The one commandment that the Lord does not declare to this young man is the last the tenth commandment you shall not covet.

And this young man was full of covetousness. he had ambition he was rich he wanted to go places he wanted to make a name for himself and as you shall see he wasn't prepared to give all that up he wasn't prepared to deny himself.

and so the Lord who knows our every desire as we stand there in Psalm 139 takes issue with this young man's inflated opinion of himself.

All these things I have kept from my youth what lack I yet? he's got no conscience he's got no sense of sin no sense of guilt no embarrassment of his lifestyle as he stands before the one good being in this whole universe.

[13 : 26] and in his own opinion he's blameless and yet he feels for him there is no eternal life.

The Lord sees this young man is so promising he wants to point him in the right direction he told and he looked at him and he loved him.

I'll return to that point again but it's the love the word used for love there is the love he has for his own. He looked at him and he loved him and he tests him to see how sincere he is. And even in the Lord's relationship with his disciples in Judas Iscariot even to the last minute he tries to give Judas Iscariot a way of escape. He tries to give this man a way of redeeming himself. You know when he says to Judas Iscariot will you betray the son of man with a kiss? Well he's saying to this young man with his inflated opinion of himself well if you want to be perfect sell all that you have and come and follow me.

[14 : 59] He professes to be ambitious for eternal life. Yes he's ambitious all right. Ambitious for himself. Ambitious for what he wants to achieve.

Ambitious to make a name for himself. And that's part of the many dangers that Christians face not only for themselves but for their families as well.

We're ambitious for ourselves and especially we're ambitious for our families. We want them to get on.

We want them to improve. Perhaps reach a higher status in society than we ever did. We want them to go and study or make a name for themselves and very often and very often at the cost of a life lived away from the family and away from the gospel.

That's not to say that those who have the skills and those who have the intellects shouldn't use them to the full as long as you recognise the dangers as long as you recognise the risks that are involved in sending our offspring away from us at such an early age.

[16 : 32] And so here we have this young man. He professes to be ambitious for eternal life. And so the Lord asks him if he's ready to forgo all the ambitions he has for this world.

He seems to be saying anything you say I'll do it anything. But he's not desperate enough. Yes he seems to be desperate but not desperate enough to give away all that he cherishes all that he holds dear all that's of value to him.

Jim Elliot a missionary to the Indians who was massacred by those whom he went to engage in missionary work with said he is no fool who gives an exchange for what he cannot keep that which he cannot lose.

Well what does this young man do now? With the mask of urgency torn away from him he stands there condemned.

He's faced with the stark choice that every one of us faces during our lifetimes. What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and yet lose his own soul?

[18 : 23] What will a man give in exchange for his own soul? And yet that's what he chooses. He chooses riches in exchange for his soul.

I wonder how many of us perhaps in here have chosen perhaps friends or a marriage or a career or even riches and said I'd rather have those than Christ.

Rather have the rewards and the applause of the world. He'd rather have them than even as we told about Moses who regarded the pleasures of sin for a season nothing in comparison to be numbered with the people of God.

See in the eyes of the world as it looks on and as it hears such a story this man has done absolutely nothing wrong. He's clever he made a name for himself he's grown in riches he's on the right way to long life and an easy retirement but in the eyes of Christ this man is showing deceit and guile and fraud and with the psalmist and blessed is the man in whom there is no sin and in whom there is no fraud nor guile shown therein.

Pretending to wanting to do God's will but really anything but pretending to want to go down that road which will give him eternal life he turns away and seeks the riches of this world instead.

[20 : 44] This young man knew exactly what was wanted of him the Lord told him you know even as all of us in here know exactly what's wanted of us all of us know there is but one thing needful and that's really the importance of the question that he asks at the beginning what lack I yet and the Lord says you lack the one thing needful you lack being full of yourself you lack being so full of yourself that you cannot see the wood for the trees you're so caught up with this world and all its applause and all its rewards that you cannot see where the true riches lie and so knowing exactly what was required of him he asks anyway hoping against hope that the

Lord isn't going to say what suddenly he's faced with what a pathetic figure he makes we're told he went away sorrowful disheartened by the saying of Christ he went away sorrowful for he had great possessions he can imagine this young man kneeling looking up to Christ with eager eyes looked

hoping that Christ is going to say something that he's going to be able to do and Christ looking down with him with loving eyes eyes which were full of pity and love towards this young man and giving him the requirement of denying himself and seeing the young man's face clouding and the eyes clouding and he drops his eyes and bows his head rises and goes away sorrowful standing at the very gates of the kingdom of heaven being promised all the riches of the kingdom of heaven the riches of the kingdom the treasures and what does he say

I prefer my own riches I prefer my own lifestyle I prefer the rewards which I've laboured so hard for and that's what I'm going to carry on doing you know even the prodigal looks good in comparison to this young man for all that the prodigal did he returned remember remember the story of the prodigal is a parable this narrative is a true story something that actually happened a young man who came face to face with Christ who ran and came eagerly and knelt before him and I wonder did he ever have opportunity to meet

Christ again we can but hope that because the Lord loved him with a love that he has for his own the love of agape that he might have been among the thousands who were at Jerusalem on that day of Pentecost the many who were converted by Peter's sermon you don't have half as many as that here or even half as many as we used to have here but there are still many and perhaps there are still many halting between two opinions and what's required of us as Christians what is the one thing needful this is life eternal that we might know

God in Christ Jesus whom he has sent and in that knowing of Christ not just a passing interest but a lifelong commitment a commitment which is so ingrained into our psyche a commitment which turns our life around from being merely interested in the things of the gospel in the means of grace with the Lord's people it becomes a commitment to all of them that our whole lives our whole desires are caught up and by Christ an old divine one said long ago nothing less will satisfy nothing more is desired is that how it is for you and for me is that the challenge that we can face as we look at ourselves each morning see the call to fellowship is a call to closing in with Christ having fellowship with him walking in the light as he is in the light my father the greatest requirement is to say [27 : 33] I love the Lord I love the Lord because my voice and prayer suited you is that where our chosen places the throne of grace speaking to Christ telling him how much he means to us desiring him more than anything else and once again the greatest requirement for any of us is to be able to say nothing less will satisfy nothing more is desired let us then conclude our worship sing to God's praise in Psalm 16 in the Scottish Psalter lo go ll what it is to be all much than what when comes to the his hands