

Mark 10:17-31

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[0 : 00] Please take your copy of God's Word out and turn to the Gospel according to Mark, chapter 10. Let me say to those of you across the hall, thank you for your patience. I stepped across the hall over there to see how things were going with the sound and realized that we had forgotten to mount the camera high enough to see what was happening on stage when everybody was standing up.

So on the TV across the hall, it was a wall of plaid. You guys wearing plaid? Yep, your backs. Which is no big deal. Please stand up during the singing.

But we'll get that all sorted out. And also, it's a little warm in here. You know, I think about that kind of thing. We cooled the room to 68 before you guys all got here, but apparently our BTU calculations were not quite correct.

And you guys are putting off more heat than the air conditioning is keeping up with. So we'll cool it more next Sunday so that we can keep up with you. Mark, chapter 10. We're continuing our verse-by-verse exposition, and we have come to verse 17, and I'll read to you through 31, and then we'll pray.

And as he, being Jesus, 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?

[1 : 15] And Jesus said to him, Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments. Do not murder. Do not commit adultery. Do not steal.

Do not bear false witness. Do not defraud. Honor your father and mother. And he said to him, Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth. And Jesus, looking at him, loved him and 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. Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God. And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, Children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God.

It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God. And they were exceedingly astonished and said to him, Then who can be saved? Jesus looked at them and said, With man it is impossible, but not with God, for all things are possible with God.

[2 : 27] Peter began to say to him, See, we have left everything and followed you. Jesus said, Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left houses or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the gospel who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands.

with persecutions and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last and the last first. This is God's word to us, written for his glory and our good.

We would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and obey its commands. Let's pray together. Father, Father, our sufficiency at all times comes from you.

But there are moments in our life that are particularly marked where we feel that need to such a greater degree. And this, for me, is one of those times.

And so, Father, I would ask that you would work in me by your spirit to preach your word well to your people. And I would also ask on behalf of them that you'd work by your spirit in their hearts to take this word and apply it appropriately to their lives.

[3 : 49] Bring about greater degrees of repentance and faith so that we will exalt the name of Jesus. And it's in that precious name I pray. Amen.

Well, once again, we have before us a pericope found in all three. Pericope's just a biblical text. Found in all three of the Synoptic Gospels. That is, this story is recorded here by Mark, by Matthew in chapter 19 of his Gospel account, and in chapter 18 of the Lucan account.

Anytime this happens, not that we should neglect any other text, but we should really pay careful attention. All three of these writers felt it important, were led by the Spirit to record these things for us.

We should give it extra attention. What can we glean from this text for our living to the glory of God? I have to tell you as I study the parallels, I'm so very pleased to be preaching from Mark's account as it's my favorite account.

And I'll tell you in a little while why his particular account is my favorite. He has been so punchy so far. He moves so quickly through the beginning part, up through about the middle of chapter 8, moving us along, hurrying us along in the narrative.

[5 : 04] And here, he begins to slow down, and he gives us some beautiful details that even the other authors do not. And once again, I have bitten off more than I think any of us can chew on a Sunday morning in one sitting.

So, I'm going to deal today with the evangelistic aspect of this text. And next week, I'll deal with the financial, the wealth aspect of it.

And we'll see what true wealth is in God's economy. So, the evangelistic aspect, you heard me correctly. Remember that Jesus was a preacher of the gospel.

He was also the fulfillment of it. He was the reason for it, but he was a preacher of the gospel. Mark 1.15, he says, the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel.

All of the miracles that we see recorded all are just giving credence to the thing that he's saying. It's the message that mattered most, not the miracles.

[6 : 08] So, he's a preacher of the gospel. And we would rightly see the rich young ruler as a seeker. This is an evangelistic encounter. Right?

That by the young man's estimation doesn't end very well, but there's much that we can learn from the way that our Lord deals with him. Now, we see that Jesus is setting out on a journey.

He has presumably left the house. We see in verse 10, he's in a house with his disciples. So, he has left that. He's setting out on a journey. He's currently in the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan.

We see that in chapter 10, verse 2. And he's working his way towards Jerusalem. This is in the months leading up to his crucifixion. He has largely left his public ministry and he's now turned his attention, his focus, his sights are set on teaching the disciples the things they will need to know once he departs from them.

He gets some interruptions in that process, but through this last half of chapter 8 and through the end of chapter 10, he lays down foundational truths that they must receive and understand to continue to follow him after his death.

[7 : 22] We know he's going to be delivered. He's said now three times, he'll say it again in the coming verses, 8.31 and 9.31. He's foretold that he's going to be delivered over to his tormentors to be crucified.

And all of this is interrupted by a man. Mark's account simply says a man. He is commonly referred to as the rich young ruler.

And we arrive at this by looking at the various accounts. So Luke 18.18, he's called a ruler. He was likely a ruler of a local synagogue.

Which is a lay position. It wasn't a Levitical position. It was a lay position. It was the person that managed the storehouses. All the provisions being there was an office manager of sorts.

But it was a highly esteemed position and it was highly lucrative. Religion was a big business in this day. Much wealth came with it.

[8 : 31] We also know that he was rich because Mark's commentary in verse 22, for he had great possessions. So here we see the rich and the ruler part of that. Matthew 19.20 says that he was the young man.

Now this position that he likely held as a ruler of the synagogue was an esteemed religious position that was prominently held by older men. They were typically called elders as a result.

Not the way we speak of biblical elders in a modern church setting, but as old men that held this position. And somehow this young man had come to be this ruler.

Which means that he was probably especially pious. From the outside he seemed to observe the law very well, which is what granted him this position.

He certainly considers himself pious as we'll see soon. This man is in the very prime of his life. He has in this cultural setting everything he could possibly want.

[9 : 38] Much wealth. Much esteem. In the culture's estimation, he was the most right with God. But yet, he knows that he lacks something.

And all humanity knows this. All humanity apart from Christ knows that there is something missing. Some people call it, in a kind of trite fashion, a God sized hole in our hearts.

All humanity knows that we were created for something in particular, and that was to exalt the creator. And when we're not doing that, things just don't go that well.

Even when they seem to be by the world's standards. People spend their lives pursuing this thing that they can't quite put their hands on, that they know they need to be fulfilled.

He recognizes that it's this concept of eternal life. He comes to Jesus seeking. And he comes to Jesus with a great expression of humility.

[10 : 49] Now keep in mind that this young man is a rich young man, and the record in Mark is that he ran up and he knelt before him. People with money in this day did not run because they could afford to have somebody else run for them.

They would have a servant who would go fetch whatever instrument they may need or go send a message to somebody else. It was considered degrading to run. No running for exercise in these days.

Running did not happen. This would have been an expression of humility. And beyond that, he kneels down before him. Jesus. And he says, good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life? He gets that he doesn't have it. Matthew 19 16 says, teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life? And in verse 20, Matthew 19, what do I still lack?

How is it that I get this thing? Now, the Jews of this day, and I would presume Jews of ours as well, have a proper view of salvation and eternal life.

[11 : 59] In fact, I think in a lot of ways, they get it more right than we do. Certainly, this man would have. They believed that to have eternal life was not simply that they would go on living, right?

That we live this life now, we die, and we continue to live, although it does mean that, but that it was to have the very life of God. God himself has eternal life, and therefore, for us to have eternal life, what great gain that is to us.

A proper biblical understanding of what it means to have life in Christ is aligned with this, that we have life now and forever more. In a sense, we bring heaven to earth when the Spirit of God comes to dwell in our hearts.

Joy is restored. The ability to live under the pressures of sin, the ability to stand up under the temptation of sin exists because of what we now have.

Now, what the life of God was exactly, they misunderstood. This is what Jesus has been teaching the disciples all along. Chapter 8, verse 34. What is he predicting?

[13 : 10] He's predicting his death. And my brain just went blank. 31. Yep, that's a typo.

And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed and after three days rise again. Nope, it wasn't a typo.

Verse 34. If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. What is it going to look like to be a disciple of Jesus Christ? What is it going to mean to have the life of God?

It's going to mean that we emulate him. Jesus, incarnate God, in flesh suffered for our sake. Again, chapter 9, verse 35.

If anyone will be first, he must be the last of all and servant of all. Beyond our text, chapter 10, verse 31. But many who are first will be last and the last first.

[14 : 11] Look at verse 43. But it shall not be so among you, but whoever would be great among you must be your servant. And whoever will be first among you, must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

This rich wrong, you would have thought he had everything he needed, and what he was coming to Jesus for was that one more thing. Let me add the bonus on top of all the things I already have. And he missed the point that for him to gain Christ, he had to give up all that he had. So what answer would you have given such a man who comes to you in such a humble position, asks such a seemingly heartfelt question?

Imagine that a man runs up to you today after the service, whatever restaurant you may go to, kneels down before you and says, good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life? I imagine that you would tell them, repent and believe, right?

You'd use Bible language. You might say, look to Christ, place your faith in him, or pray this prayer. In a different setting, one might say, walk the aisle, or here, read this tract, right?

[15 : 29] And all these things would be well motivated, of course, right? We want people to respond to the gospel. We want people to understand the very essence of what it means to place faith in Christ.

I believe this is the answer we would give them all. Isn't this exactly what Jesus did when Nicodemus, another ruler of the Jews, sought him out? John 3, 14 and 15.

It says, Moses lifted up the servant in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. Or in John 6, 28, when Jesus is teaching the crowds, they say to him, what must we do to be doing the works of God?

Jesus answered them, this is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent. Or you could be taking your cues from Paul and Silas when the Philippian jailer asked them in Acts 16, 30, sirs, what must I do to be saved?

And they said, believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved. We see a biblical pattern for this type of response to such a question. So why does Jesus' answer vary from this pattern?

[16 : 42] What can we learn from Jesus about his evangelistic methods and therefore the proper evangelistic methods? Is it possible that you have and are presuming that you may have something to teach Jesus about evangelism?

Is it possible that evangelical Christians have been sharing Christ wrongly? So why does his answer vary? And the key to that is in Jesus' immediate response to the man.

Verse 18, he says, why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.

Now it's interesting, isn't it? Because we could rightly call Jesus good, right? Jesus, who lived a sinless life up to this point. of course, had not sinned. If anybody on earth was to be called good, it would have been Jesus.

But this man did not know who he was. This man did not have a clear revelation that he was the Christ.

[17 : 49] He simply comes to him, a man he knows has been traveling and teaching about the kingdom of God, who has done many miracles, and he applies very loosely, he throws a term on him that is good.

He doesn't get it, which is why Jesus responds in the way that he does. Further, he should have known his scriptures. This man certainly would have studied them.

Romans 3, 10-12, where Paul quotes from Psalm 14 and Psalm 53, which this young ruler would have had, one of the few copies, he would have had access to it.

Paul sums it up for us and says, none is righteous or good, no not one, no one understands, no one seeks for God, all have turned aside, together they have become worthless, no one does good, not even one.

No one does good, no one is good, except God alone. And Jesus' response redefines for us what goodness is.

[18 : 53] He sets God up as the standard for goodness. He makes goodness objective rather than subjective. If I compare myself to you, I might come out okay.

I also may not. If I compare myself to God, in every case, I will be left with no doubt that I need the goodness of Christ.

God alone is good. Matthew 19-16 kind of pointily says, Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?

This man thought that he could amass for himself merit by the way in which he lived. He was incredibly delusional. He thinks that he has kept the law.

He thinks that he is righteous by his own doing. Do you remember the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector? Peter? In Luke, it's recorded just before the telling of this particular story.

[20 : 00] Let me read that to you. Luke 18, beginning in verse 9. Jesus also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and treated others with contempt.

Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee standing by himself prayed thus, God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.

I fast twice a week. I give tithes of all that I get. But the tax collector standing far off would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast saying, God, be merciful to me, a sinner.

I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted. The Pharisee compares himself to the tax collector and finds himself righteous.

The tax collector is honest with who he is before God and says, I am a sinner. Please have mercy on me. I cannot merit that on my own.

[21 : 09] I cannot earn it. It must be your gracious extension of mercy. mercy. This is the good news of the gospel, beloved.

This is the wonderful news of the gospel. That apart from anything we could possibly do to earn God's favor, he extends it to us all the same.

But good news isn't good news without bad news, is it? There certainly is bad news. I just read to you Romans 3. 10-12, none is righteous.

No, not one. No one understands. No one seeks for God. All have turned aside. Together they have become worthless. No one does good. Not even one. We learn in Romans that the wages of sin is death.

This is what due to us is the just punishment for our sin. What has been accounted to us is death because of our sin. And none of us have escaped this.

[22 : 07] Not a single person in my hearing can say I am without sin. You're not. By your nature are sinful before Christ.

I praise God in Romans 3. Paul keeps writing because he could because of the gospel. He had so much more to say about the gospel. Verse 21 and 22, but now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law.

Although the law and the prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believed. Martin Luther called it the great exchange.

Jesus took on our sin on the cross. He took the wrath of God that was due us and he gave to us his righteousness. This is how we stand before God. Not by anything that we could earn.

Right? You're deluded if you think that walking an aisle or praying a particular prayer is what makes you in a right standing before God. If someone has misled you in that way, if you hang the surety of your salvation on some experience, some date, let me warn you, urge you, do not let that be your surety.

[23 : 21] It's on the work of Christ in your life. Do you have the Spirit of God? Do you love Him more than the things of this world? God the rich young ruler was not truly humble.

He was in exterior fashion. He did not really recognize his poverty. Do you recognize yours? He knew something was missing, but he did not come to Jesus seeking for God, but rather what he could gain from God.

He was exalting himself. He was self-righteous. proud. He possessed this outward appearance of humility, but inwardly was totally proud. And Jesus surmises all of this from one word, good.

But he probes further. He quotes the latter half of the Ten Commandments. It's six. I know there's ten. It's a little more than the latter half. The latter half of the Ten Commandments.

Those that deal with relationships between men. You can find that in Exodus 20 and the restating of it in Deuteronomy chapter 5. Verse 19. Do not murder. Do not commit adultery. Do not steal.

[24 : 30] Do not bear false witness. Do not defraud. Honor your father and mother. The young man knew these laws. He didn't scratch his head at these things. He knew these things and we see that in his response.

But he fails to see the purpose of the law. The purpose of the law was that it was meant to teach our need for a Savior. The law sets up God's standard for righteousness.

A righteous that we cannot possibly achieve. And I'll say it again. We need the righteousness of Christ that is granted to us through repentance and faith.

The law was always meant to point us to this great reality. Paul recorded in Galatians chapter 3 verse 23 through 26.

Now before faith came we were held captive under the law and imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then the law was our guardian until Christ came in order that we might be justified by faith.

[25 : 33] But now that faith has come we are no longer under a guardian for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith. Now in Jewish culture young people had very little value.

In fact when they were very young they weren't really even considered sons and daughters. They didn't have the rights that sons and daughters had in the household. And placed above them was a person that was hired out called a guardian.

They were kind of a taskmaster. They were the person that made sure that they got to school that they learned the Torah and they did all the things that they were meant to do. And they were given permission to be rather violent with the children.

They kind of beat them in to submission. And see what Paul is saying here about the law being our guardian until Christ comes. In verse 26 for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God.

We've been set free from the demands of the law that none of us could keep. We've been given the righteousness of Christ. The law aims us at Him.

[26 : 39] Put another way, John Bunyan in his wonderful book The Pilgrim's Progress. If you have not read The Pilgrim's Progress, you are behind most Christianity, you need to pick it up and read it.

And it's the story of a man named Christian in his journey to the celestial city. And he meets along this journey a wonderful character that travels with him for quite some time named Faith. And Faith has had some experience prior to their meeting together and he's recounting that experience here. Faith says, But good brother, hear me out. So soon as the man overtook me, he's journeying up a hill, so soon as the man overtook me, he was but a word and a blow, for down he knocked me and laid me for dead.

But when I was a little come to myself again, I asked him, wherefore has he served me? So why did you hit me? He said, because of my secret inclining to Adam the first. And with that, he struck me another deadly blow on the breast and lay at his foot as dead as before.

So when I came to myself again, I cried him mercy, but he said, I know not how to show mercy. And with that, he knocked me down again. He had doubtless made an end of me, but that one came by and bid him forbear.

[27 : 56] So there's a man faced on his journey, this man keeps knocking him out. When he comes to, he has a conversation with him, and he knocks him out again. Show me mercy, I don't know how to show mercy. And then stop.

Christian asks, who was that that bid him forbear or to stop? And faith says, I did not know him at first, but as he went by, I perceived the holes in his hands and his sides, that I concluded that he was our Lord, so I went up the hill.

And Christian responds, that man that overtook you was Moses. He spareth none, neither knoweth he how to show mercy to those that transgress his law.

And John Bunyan is not saying here that Moses is evil to us, but the law is our tutor. The law is meant to show us our failing again and again.

It's meant to drive us to Christ. And the rich young ruler missed the point. He had missed it. Look at his response in verse 20. He says, Teacher, all these I have kept from mine youth.

[29 : 05] I really want Jesus at this point. I really want him to say, no, you have, have you lost your mind? You have not kept these things from your youth. But Jesus presses on in a very compassionate way, which is why I love Mark's record of this event best.

It says, verse 21, and Jesus looking at him, loved him. The other accounts don't say that about this. He looks at him and he loves him.

And because he loves him, he points out his sinfulness. He doesn't skirt around it. He's not concerned about his feelings.

He strikes him right between the eyes. He goes straight to the heart of the issue and points out his sin. And in this case, he says, you lack one thing.

Go sell all you have, give to the poor, and you have treasure! in heaven, and come follow me. Jesus exposes his obvious failure to keep the first half of the law.

[30 : 09] Again, the first four commandments. Deuteronomy 6.5 in a summary statement of those commands, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might.

Remember Matthew chapter 22, the lawyer comes and asks him, teacher, what is the greatest commandment? It's a test. He rightly responds with quoting Deuteronomy 6.5 and verse 39 says in the second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

This is the summary of the second half of the Ten Commandments. And he says in verse 40, on these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets. So he goes very straight to the thing.

He says to the man, you love your wealth more than you love God. Your wealth is an idol. Get rid of the idol and follow me. And how does the man respond?

He's disheartened. He goes away sorrowful. And I love, and it's in all the accounts, for he had great possessions.

[31 : 13] His response gives the evidence that he had not and could not keep the law. His love for his! was much greater than the promise of eternal joy.

The temporal things were distracting him from the eternal things. Look at the offer of Jesus. You will have treasure in heaven for eternity and come follow me.

He offers not only treasure, but he offers him himself. And the man turns away from this. That's why Jesus then turns to his disciples and say it's going to be difficult for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God.

He reiterates this a number of times and we're going to look at that at length next week. And the disciples are distraught by this. Well gosh, if the rich can't get into heaven, right?

All the religious of this day had a lot of wealth. If they can't God, we'll digest all of that a bit more next week.

[32 : 26] So what's the application of this for our lives? Number one, we should model our evangelistic efforts after those of our Lord. Note, Jesus gives the law where there is pride and grace as we saw in a number of cases where there is humility.

We ought to do the very same. We live in a very religiously infected area.

People who think that going through certain motions is what gains them access to God. And in the southeast it would seem that for most people we have to convince them that they're not saved so that we can show them how to be saved.

They need the law before they need the gospel of grace. Someone is proud in that way. They need to be brought low.

This is the loving thing to do for them. We're not doing anybody any favors if we avoid teaching that they fall short of God's standard.

[33 : 36] It is not my job on a Sunday morning to make you feel good about yourself. Hear that. That is not my job. If I were doing that I would be failing miserably at the task ahead of me.

It's my job to teach you the whole counsel of God which includes your sinfulness. It includes who you really are apart from Christ.

And doing this exalts Christ. You should leave our meetings. You should leave feeling little about yourself.

but finding that you have worth in Jesus Christ and finding much in Him. That's why we get together.

Recognize who we are. This is why we have a prayer of confession before the preaching that we recognize who we are as we come to the word of God. That we might hear what it has to say to us.

This is God's word spoken!

[34 : 34] to us for his glory and for our good. Let us sit under it humbly because we are people. We are created. He is creator.

There are many evangelical leaders with good intentions that have arranged everything their churches do to reach the seeker. We have a term for that.

We call them seeker friendly churches. Do we not? And I'll tell you right now, I don't like! the term!! There's really what you need.

What you really need is Jesus. That's what we want to give you when you come here. Seeker friendly churches in so many ways have stepped away from the truth of the gospel because they say to people you're good the way you are you're just not quite good enough.

Let's bandage your life with Jesus. You're sick. You need a physician. You're dead. You need a savior. Many churches driving distance of us do not hold congregational meetings.

[36 : 11] The meeting of the church is for the church. We might be built up and edified. If a non-believer wanders in amongst us, praise God for that. They'll hear the gospel. But it is for us that we might go out and share the gospel with everybody that we encounter.

That is the task before all of you who claim the name of Christ. It's why we come together for the building up for good works that have been prepared beforehand for us.

Many churches simply have evangelistic meetings. There's a place and a time for that. But it's not every Sunday. And their members are malnourished as a result. We should model the sharing of our faith after the way Jesus shared.

Secondly, you should consider whether or not you have ever placed believing faith in Christ. If you are amongst us today as a seeker or one who has thought you were in Christ and have found that in some way you have based that on the merit of your own works, ask the question of yourself, have you believed?

Is all of your salvation found in Jesus? Is your sufficiency from him? Your good works will never merit your salvation. They are, however, the necessary outflow of our salvation and we should all thirdly consider the implications of this text for those of us who are believers.

[37 : 43] Again, we'll develop this further next week, but how is our response to the good news of Jesus Christ evidenced in the way we hold on to the things of this world?

How is it evidenced? If we believe that Jesus is who he says that he is, that he is the exalted son of God, that he has come on our behalf, he has delivered us from the eternal torment do to us for our sin, not unjustly, God owes it to us for the way we treat him.

If that's who we believe that Jesus is, and we placed our faith in him, how do we respond to that great truth? We'll talk more about that next week.

We can consider our possessions great and not have all that much. So there's much to be learned here, and I hope that you will work on applying this to your heart.

Let's pray together.