

Scripture: Mark 10:17-31

Text: Mark 10:17-24a

Jesus, Wealth, and Our Salvation

Beloved in Christ, sometimes when you see people, it seems that certain people have their life all together. It seems they have no concerns or needs. But that's only appearance.

In this passage it seems like this man is all set. He is a man of wealth. He has everything. In Matthew's gospel, we learn that he is young (Matthew 19:22). He has his whole future before him. And in Luke's gospel we also find out that he is a man of status in the community. He is a ruler [Luke 18:18].

But the Lord Jesus sees what we don't see. For He knows what it is in man (John 2:25)

One of the joys in reading the gospels is the reading of the one-on-one encounters Jesus has. He always 'hits home'. He lays His finger on the sore spot, the area in our lives that needs addressed. There is no better Counselor. In the Bible, He is called the Wonderful Counselor (Isaiah 9:6). His Holy Spirit, who is also called the Counselor, "*guides us into all truth*" through His Word (John 16:13).

Into all truth is where Jesus is guiding this man with great wealth. From Mark 10:17-24a, I bring God's Word to you today, 'Jesus counsels a man with great wealth.' We see

1. His burning question
2. Jesus' loving call
3. His heart-breaking response

1. This man's burning question (v.17)

Verse 17 begins with Jesus walking down the road. He and His disciples had just left the home where Jesus blessed the little children, saying 'Let the little children come to Me'.

Now a man comes, out of nowhere, running down the road. He has something to ask, a burning question. He needs to get it off his chest. It is troubling him. It's time to get counsel. Jesus is the One to whom he may go. The man knows that He hears. He listens. He helps. As we see in **verse 17**, this man shows his eagerness by running and then by kneeling before Jesus on the road. And as he does this, he is asking his burning question, long disturbing his heart and mind.

So what is his question? Does he ask Jesus for a well-adjusted happy life? No, He asks for something far deeper and more important. "*Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?*" This is the most important question anyone can ask. Would that more people would ask it! He wants eternal life with God; that is, the life of the kingdom. He wants peace of mind now and never-ending life for the future.

He asks, "*what shall I do . . .*"? This is not a bad question in itself. When those who heard Peter were cut to the heart by the message of the gospel, they also cried out, "*Men and brethren, what shall we do*" (Acts 2:37)? Likewise the jailer in Philippi trembled before the apostle Paul and Silas, saying "*Sirs, what must I do to be saved*" (Acts 16:30)?

But this man had been taught and raised to think that the way to life was by obeying the Ten Commandments as we see in verses 19-20. He was a pious man, a good young man, well-groomed, and well respected in his

traditional community. Look at his achievements. He is doing everything. He is thinking, 'what more shall I do?'

He is not deceiving Jesus with his question. His question is genuine. His search is real. Something is missing in his life. Something is lacking. He is obeying the law in every way, but he doesn't have the life that satisfies. He is not happy. *"Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"* He seems willing to do most anything. This leads us to Jesus' loving call in this man's life

2. Jesus' loving call (vv.18-21)

Jesus begins where this man is at in his life and brings him to where He wants him to be. In other words, Jesus begins on his level. In these verses we can learn so much from Jesus' strategy to reach the heart of a person.

I remember an example. In a discussion with a Roman Catholic neighbor, I asked if he had been to the confessional lately to confess his sins to the priest. He said, "no." I said to him, "Your sins must be piling up by now!" At that point, I shared with him from the Bible that God requires us to confess our sins to our only high Priest, who is Jesus. I wanted to bring him to the truth!

Here Jesus begins on this man's turf in **verses 18-19**. He says to him, *"Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God."* By this question Jesus is not saying that He is not good (sinless). He is good. He is not saying that He is not God. He is God, the Son of God. So why does Jesus say this – in this way?

The man is thinking that what you do makes you good. This man is calling Jesus, 'good Teacher', because He is doing good things. But this man does not know that Jesus is God. Jesus, therefore, says to him the only One good is God! If no one is good except God alone, then this man is not good before God, even if he thinks he keeps (obeys) all God's commandments!

Jesus intends to shake up this man's confidence in himself, in his own goodness and turn his attention to God!

Jesus then reminds this man of God's commandments, which are the absolute standard or norm of goodness in verse 19. He reminds this man of the commandments that he thinks he is obeying. *"You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Do not defraud,' 'Honor your father and your mother'"*

Jesus mentions commandments 5-9, the commandments that focus on showing love to our neighbor, from Exodus 20:12-16, though not in the same order. "Do not defraud" is an application of the 8th commandment: 'Do not steal.'

In answer to his, *'what shall I do...'*? Jesus says 'Do?' If you are talking about doing, then you have to do the entire law of God perfectly!

In verse 20, he brings his remarkable moral report card to Jesus, *"Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth."* He never slept with another woman; he never murdered anyone; never stole a candybar; never lied in court; never exploited the poor; and he always honored his parents.

Yes, in terms of his outward obedience to the law, he looked very good. This man was like the apostle Paul before he became a follower of Christ who said, *"concerning the righteousness in the law, blameless"*

[Philippians 3:6). He didn't understand the depth of the law, that it sees in you what other people don't see: lust, hate, greed and every other evil intent.

The Lord Jesus, now, lays his finger on the sore spot in this man's life, with pointed accuracy. He goes straight to the heart in **verse 21**. *"Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, 'One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor; and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.'"*

Jesus is clear in His counsel. Christ gives him the answer that he needs, though it is difficult. In love, Christ draws the man to trust Him. Do you want to have? Then get rid of whatever you have: Go! Sell! Give! And you will have treasure in heaven. The deepest answer to his burning question of verse 17 is Jesus' call *"come and follow Me, taking up the cross."*

Jesus offers Himself in the place of this man's possessions. It's a call to trust in Christ alone; not in your wealth, not in your status, not in your good works, not in your obeying the law, or in how good you are. But in the One who kept the law perfectly and paid the price through His death on the cross for us who did obey it perfectly.

Clearly the issue was idolatry in his life. In the first commandment, God says, "You shall have no other gods before Me." Wealth was first in his life. It was his god. Notice as well, Jesus mentions commandments 5-9 in verse 19, but not the tenth. This comes out now, *"covetousness, which is idolatry"* (Colossians 3:5).

His lack was faith and trust in Jesus. Remember our passage from last week, "Let the little children come to Me" [10:13-16]? They were totally helpless, with nothing to bring. The children showed faith and trust in Jesus. You, too, need to enter the kingdom as a child. Only when he would sell all he had, only when he would become like a helpless child, will he receive the gift, including eternal life!

How does he respond to the loving call of Jesus in his life? See

3. His heart-breaking response (vv.22-24a)

We read in **verse 22**, *"But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions."*

Beloved, he couldn't do it. He understood Jesus' counsel. But he couldn't accept it. He simply couldn't break with his possessions and follow Jesus. That's why he was sad. That's why he went away sorrowful. Jesus says, "either your possessions or Me". It can't be both. It's one or the other. Sooner than giving up his wealth, he gave up Jesus and eternal life.

We don't know if he ever did forsake all and believe on Jesus.

In **verses 23-24**, Jesus indicates that wealth and possessions that prevented one man from following Jesus is also a matter of concern for those who follow Jesus. Jesus now turns from the rich young man to His disciples, *"Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, 'how hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God. And the disciples were astonished at His words.'" (in verse 25, Jesus uses the word 'trust')*

The Bible is clear that being rich is not sinful. Consider Abraham, Job, Joseph of Arimathea. Riches may be a blessing! But the love of riches and possessions is sinful. And also for those who covet riches. It can easily occupy first place in the life of a disciple. It easily competes with your loyalty and love to Jesus Christ. That's what Jesus is saying to His disciples.

The Bible says in 1 Timothy 6:9, *“Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.”* If riches are your god, then sell and give it away, literally. If that’s what it takes to break from your god and trust and follow Christ and receive eternal life, do it now.

But, in a very real sense, everyone who comes to Christ in faith, renounces everything including his possessions. Christ then gives it all back to us, not to serve ourselves with it, but to serve Him and for the building of His kingdom. The gift of eternal life and the treasure in heaven is already yours in Christ. Hold on to that! Invest all you have, everything, for service in His kingdom!

Why were the disciples astonished at Jesus words? In that day, to have riches was to have honor. If you were rich, you had a good standing. Think of this man who came to Jesus. He was respected. He was a good man. He had honor because of his riches. It was easy to think he had a good standing with Christ and a place in the kingdom.

Look what happened to this man who came to Jesus. He went away in shame. His head hung down in sadness and with great sorrow, though he was rich.

But no, all must come to Jesus equally in the same way, rich and poor alike. By faith alone! You must come like a trusting child (Mark 10:13-16), totally helpless, poor, with nothing to bring. Receive Christ in faith. Receiving Him, you receive the gift of the kingdom, treasure in heaven and eternal life! He, our risen Lord and Savior who died for sinners, honors you with His riches! Amen