

## There is a Cost to Following Jesus

Mark 10:17 – 31

**Proposition:** Nothing should stand in the way of our relationship to the Lord.

**Application:** Come to Jesus as you are but don't leave as you came.

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Who am I? Why am I here? What is my purpose in life? Where will I go when I die? These are ultimate questions. We all ask them. We all think about them. Such questions go to the very heart of what it means to be human. In the passage we are looking at today a man was seeking an answer to an ultimate question. He framed his question as follows: – *what must I do to inherit eternal life?* The response Jesus gave, is that nothing should stand in the way of our relationship with the Lord.

### I. The Man's Request (10:17)

*The Man's Status and Search* (10:17): Jesus was on His last journey to Jerusalem. As He and His disciples left the region a man rushed up to Jesus and dropped to his knees. Matthew tells us he was young (Matt 19:20). Luke says he was a ruler, likely in charge of a local synagogue (Luke 18:18). All three Gospels mention he was rich. He was a man of influence. He was a man of affluence. He was a man with integrity. He was everything a parent would want for their son. Yet this rich young ruler knew something was missing in his life, and he wanted to do something about it. He wanted to know what meritorious deed he must do to gain eternal life. He assumed he was able to do whatever was required. He just needed guidance. So, he went to Jesus. It is a big mistake to think we can do something to inherit eternal life. An inheritance is something we receive, not something we achieve. All religions can be ranked as either a *do* or a *done* religion. Salvation is not a reward for good works I *do* it is a gift received through faith in Christ Jesus because of what He has *done*.

This rich young ruler is a picture of one seeking to earn eternal life through good works.

### II. The Lord's Response (10:18 – 27)

*Response to the Rich Young Ruler* (10:18, 19): Jesus focussed on the word *good*. Only God is good in an absolute sense. We are good in a relative way. We might be a better person than the man next door, but no one is as good as God. Calling Jesus good is to call Him God. If the rich young ruler believed Jesus was good, it was because He is God. If he did not think Jesus was God, he should not call Him good. The six commandments Jesus listed are from the second tablet of the 10 commandments – which deal with human relationships. The first tablet of the commandments, deal with our relationship to God.

*Do not defraud* is another way of saying *do not covet*. To sin of covetousness can sometimes lead to the action of defrauding. Fraud may be a special temptation for the wealthy.

*Rich Young Ruler's Response* (10:20): Notice the young ruler dropped the word *good*. Was he not willing to accept Jesus was God in the flesh? Scripture teaches that Jesus is God incarnate (John 1:1, 14).

The phrase *from my youth up* suggests that at the age of 13 this rich young ruler took upon himself the duty to obey the commandments. According to Jewish tradition, when a young man reaches 13 years of age, he has a bar mitzvah – he becomes a son of the commandments – he commits to living a Torah lifestyle. From the age of 13 this young man's record was spotless. He was like Paul who also claimed to have kept the commandments (Phil 3:6b). We may say to ourselves, *I love my wife. I provide for my family. I honour my parents. I go to church. I don't cheat on my taxes. I am an honest guy. In fact, compared to the guy next door I am a saint.* And yet even if we do every good deed we can think of, we still will not be righteous. We still will not have peace. We still will lack the assurance of salvation.

Jesus did not correct the young man, but He did address the root cause of his problem.

*Root Cause* (10:21): Jesus loved the man so much that He offered him the way of salvation. Love will not force a person to accept the offer, nor will it lower the standard to make the offer more acceptable. This young man's problem was that his wealth stood in the way of His walk with the Lord. He made riches his idol. He broke the 1<sup>st</sup> commandment – *you shall have no other gods before Me*. This young man needed to tear himself away from his self-righteousness and from his idolatry. What Jesus asked of this man He Himself did. Jesus the supreme rich Ruler gave up His riches in glory for the sake of a world drowning in sin (2 Cor 8:9). Jesus does not call us to poverty He calls us to discipleship. We cannot be of service to the Lord, if we love riches more than we love the Lord (Luke 16:13). Jesus is not teaching that wealth is evil, and poverty is righteous. He is not saying poverty is better than riches. The issue is that the love of money keeps us from loving the Lord and serving Him. Jesus does not ask every wealthy person to do what He asked this rich young ruler to do – but He does command us to remove all things standing in the way of our relationship to Him. Sin hinders us from receiving the Lord Jesus into our hearts. That is why we must repent of our sin to receive the Lord into our lives. But it does not end there. There are things that may hinder us from following the Lord. Even good things can stand in the way of our obedience. It may not be money. But it may be a relationship, a job, family. We may be more devoted to the good things in life than we are to the Lord (Heb 12:1). The Lord commands us to lay aside anything that stands in the way of our obedience to Him.

This rich young ruler asked the right question. He went to the right Person. He received the right answer, but sadly he made the wrong choice. This was far more than he bargained for. All other rabbis would never have asked this of him.

*Refusal (10:22):* Maybe this rich young ruler was looking for an easy fix to his spiritual problem. Bible scholar Graham Scroggie once said, “*he wanted God but not at the cost of his gold. He wanted life but not at the expense of luxury. He was willing to serve but not to sacrifice.*” We cannot know whether this man later repented of his sin and believed in the Lord Jesus as his Saviour. But a day did come when his youth was gone; his leadership replaced; and death gripped his body leaving his wealth behind. This man may have ended up in hell because he chose status over salvation. It is indeed a tragedy to lose the eternal because we can’t let go of the temporal (Matt 16:26). Please do not make the same tragic mistake. There was another rich man who could set aside his wealth so that he might find life. His name was Zaccheus (Luke 19:8, 9).

Jesus used this event as a teaching moment.

*Relating to the 12 (10:23 – 25):* Wealth anchors us to this world. Because of the strong effect wealth has on us it can weaken our resolve to choose the greater good. What holds true for rich people holds true for all people. It is hard for anyone rich or poor to enter the kingdom. In this life we labour for our rewards. We work for good grades. We work to earn an income. We work to be good parents. But when it comes to salvation work does not work. Apart from the grace of God it is impossible for all people, rich or poor, to enter the narrow gate of salvation (Matt 7:13, 14).

A wealthy man was dying in his mansion and his friends gathered to ask him for his last wish. He said, “*before I die, I would like to take a ride.*” They asked him what he needed for his final ride. He said, “*I would like a very small camel and a very large needle.*” This point of Jesus’ proverb was to describe something impossible. A camel, the largest beast of burden in Israel at the time, could not squeeze through the smallest opening – a needle’s eye. It is impossible for anyone, rich or poor, to squeeze their way into the kingdom of God unless God makes it happen. Redemption requires a miracle!

*Redemption Requires a Miracle (10:26, 27):* The view at the time was that wealth was a sign of God’s favour and reward for godly living (Deut 28:1, 2, 8, 11). Poverty was proof of God’s disfavour and the outcome of living in sin. This was the view of Job’s counsellors (Job 15:20, 29). But in fact, the wicked often prosper and the godly suffer (Ps 73:3, 12, 14, 28). Salvation from start to finish is not a human achievement. God planned our salvation in eternity past. Jesus achieved our salvation through His death and resurrection. The Holy Spirit applies

salvation to our heart through repentance and faith in Christ Jesus. Every saved person is a living miracle. Every person in the future kingdom, is there by the grace of God.

Suppose a man falls off a boat at sea because of rough waters. Soon a rescue craft arrives. The man in the rescue boat extends his hand and tells the drowning man to grab his hand. If he does not do so he will perish. The man cannot go around and brag to his friends how he saved himself by extending his hand. That is the same with salvation. We must do something – and yet we cannot boast in what we do. We must receive the help God gives. We do that by repenting of our sin and receiving the Lord Jesus into our hearts. We must receive the King to enter the kingdom.

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### **III. The Disciples Reward (10:28 – 31)**

*Reward for Service (10:28 – 31):* Peter, Andrew, James, John left the family business behind for the greater cause of the Gospel. What they did was costly. The principle goes like this: *leave a little get a lot*. The Lord Jesus makes up for every loss we incur for the sake of the Gospel – if not in this life surely in the life to come. Hudson Taylor the great missionary to China was robbed of all his possessions; lost three of his nine children; was almost killed in China during a civil war; his first wife died of cholera and after 50 years of ministry in China he said: “*I never made a sacrifice.*” Jesus promises to work with us in such a way that we will say we did not sacrifice anything.

Maybe you feel like the rich man. You have a good life; a good paying job; you have influence and integrity yet there is still something missing. Like the rich young ruler come to Jesus as you are but unlike the rich young ruler don’t leave as you came. Admit your sin. Believe Jesus died for your sin and rose again on the third day. Call on Him and be saved. For those who know the Lord picture life without wealth. All you have is Jesus. Is He enough? Do you believe, that to have Jesus is to have everything? That is the question I put before you today. How will you answer?