

Ben Libby

Sermon

October 17th, 21st Sunday after Pentecost

To the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the One who is, who was, and is to come, to Him be glory forever amen. (Rev 1:8 NKJ)

Our sermon text for this Sunday is taken from Mark, chapter 10, beginning with verse 17:

As Jesus was setting out on a journey, one man ran up to him and knelt in front of him. He asked, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” 18 Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except one—God. 19 You know the commandments. ‘You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not give false testimony. You shall not defraud. Honor your father and mother.’” 20 The man replied, “Teacher, I have kept all these since I was a child.” 21 Jesus looked at him, loved him, and said to him, “One thing you lack. Go, sell whatever you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” 22 When he heard this, he looked sad and went away grieving, because he had great wealth. 23 Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it will be for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!” 24 The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus told them again, “Children, how hard it is for those who trust in their riches to enter the kingdom of God! 25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” 26 They were even more astonished and said to one another, “Who then can be saved?” 27 Jesus looked at them and said, “For people, it is impossible, but not for God, because all things are possible for God.”

This is the Word of the LORD!!!

Mercy, Grace, and peace are yours through your God and Father, and through His Son, Jesus Christ, true God and Man, dear fellow Sons and Daughters of the King...

Is it better to earn something or be given something? They say “If you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day. If you teach a man to fish, you feed him for a lifetime.” You give a man a fish, and that would be good for him that day. But if you teach him how to earn his own fish, that skill would feed him throughout his life.

In the eyes of the world, it is better to earn things for yourself. If you work for it, theoretically you will appreciate it more. There is a sense of pride that comes from a good work ethic. It is a good thing to be able to provide for yourself. But at the end of the day, there is only so much we can truly earn. Some things can only be given.

The man who came up to Jesus in our text wasn't spiritually looking for a fish. He was looking for a way to spiritually feed himself. Who better to teach him this secret than this “Good Teacher”? But the man's

problem was that he didn't understand that he wasn't capable of learning how to feed himself spiritually, nor was he even capable of eating spiritually. His problem is one that we share as well. He was not unique in his inability. But the difference between this rich young man and all who follow Jesus is that we understand that it's better to be given what this man was seeking than it is to earn it. It's better to be given it because we can't earn it.

Jesus is the Good Teacher. He is the Good Teacher because He's more than just that. He didn't just talk the talk; He walked the walk. Jesus' teachings are truly good, because Jesus' teachings redefine our terms. Jesus redefines what “Good” is. Jesus redefines what “Rich” is. And, Jesus redefines what “Hard” and “Impossible” actually mean. MAY THE WORDS OF MY MOUTH AND THE MEDITATIONS OF OUR HEARTS BE ACCEPTABLE IN YOUR

SIGHT O LORD, OUR MAKER AND REDEEMER.
AMEN!

We don't know much about this person. He is referred to as the Rich Young Man, or the Rich Young Ruler. We know from the following verses that he had great possessions. But not a whole lot besides that. But what he says tells us more about him any biography ever could. **As Jesus was setting out on a journey, one man ran up to him and knelt in front of him. He asked, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"**

This man, like many others before and after him, was searching for something. Some people call this "The meaning of life". While others might word it differently, that's essentially what he is looking for. But his question is a bad one, and by what he asks you can see just how far away he truly is. He seeks out Jesus and approaches him in reverence. He kneels before Him, clearly understanding that this was a teacher of significance. He addresses Him as "Good Teacher". It was rare to address a person in the Jewish culture as "Good". But his question is anything but good. **what must I do to inherit eternal life?**

Inheritance isn't based on something you do, it's based on who you are related to. Inheritance is also based on death. So, how could someone be handed down eternal life? But his phraseology here isn't the biggest problem. It's his implied notion that he could earn eternal life.

But Jesus doesn't flinch. They say there is no such thing as a stupid question. I think Jesus would contest that saying. But this was the Savior, the man who loved the world so much that He gave up His life for it. Right away, the very first thing Jesus says to this man was to deflect from the self and back to God. **Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except one—God.**

Some people claim that Jesus never said that He was God. This is certainly not the case, but some would point to this passage as evidence. But anyone who would claim this is just as lost as that rich man

was. Jesus is not saying that He's not God nor good for that matter. If that was what He was saying, then He would've said, **Why do you call me good? I am not. Or Only God is good, and I am not.** He doesn't say that. But Jesus understands that this man is lost, and for him to ultimately realize that Jesus is truly the Good Teacher and even God, first he needs a big heaping helping of the law.

By first pointing out that only God is good, Jesus is referring to the first table of the Ten Commandments. Then He goes on to explicitly name out the second: **You know the commandments. 'You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not give false testimony. You shall not defraud. Honor your father and mother.'**

We know these to be commandments 4-10. You might wonder what "defraud" is doing in there, after all doesn't defraud fall under the same category as "You shall not steal"? Well, no. You shall not defraud is what we would know to be "You shall not covet".

The word, "Good", isn't really a good adjective anymore. If you saw a movie, and someone asked you, "How was it?", and you simply answer, "It was good", then they probably wouldn't be too excited to see it for themselves. It's strange, because good for us these days isn't good enough. But, for God to call something good is different. Like we mentioned last week, God determined that His creation which He made was "good". He wasn't being modest. He was simply calling a spade a spade. IT WAS GOOD.

The man calls Jesus "Good" although he truly didn't understand just how good He was. That Good Teacher points the man back to God and His Good Book, His Law specifically. In the Matthew account of this text, the Man asks, "What good thing must I do"? Clearly, this man didn't understand what good was.

Keeping the commandments is good. But mankind runs into a problem with them. Our problem with the ten commandments is WE'RE NOT GOOD AT KEEPING THEM. The problem isn't with the commandments, they are truly good. The problem is

with man. We're not good at obeying God. In fact, we're downright terrible. This is one of the 3 functions of the Law. We call it the "Mirror" usage. When confronted with the Law, we are supposed to see how bad we are at keeping them, and reflect the truth that therefore we are bad, that is, sinful.

But the man couldn't see that mirror. **20 The man replied, "Teacher, I have kept all these since I was a child."**

This rich man wasn't very rich at all. He had great possessions, but he lacked something that outweighed all of that. He thought he had kept the whole law. What he is essentially saying is another take on the word good, and it's one that we see all the time. When someone dies, you often have people come forward and saying, "You know, they really were a good person." Or sometimes we say it about ourselves. "I am a good guy". But "good" isn't good enough. A "good person" is judging by the easiest of curves. There are so many bad people, a good one in comparison doesn't mean much.

Spiritually, it means nothing. But Jesus is Good, and we can see that by His follow up to the man's incorrect assessment here: **21 Jesus looked at him, loved him, and said to him, "One thing you lack. Go, sell whatever you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."**

Is Jesus being generous when He says, "One thing you lack"? No. But that One thing was a big one. We should all know, because we all lack it.

Jesus looked at the man and loved him. His love is evident because of His response. Jesus loved this man so much that He would die for his sins. But is this response law or gospel? It's more law. This response was specially tailored to the man. Some incorrectly interpret it as something we all need to do. When you become a monk, you are forced to take a vow of poverty. This verse is the reason. But, once more, that assumption misses the point Jesus is making here.

What Jesus is driving at here is that One thing this man lacked was commandment number one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your might, or **"You shall have no other gods before Me. (Exo 20:3 NKJ)** This man served another god, and it made him depart in sorrow. **22 When he heard this, he looked sad and went away grieving, because he had great wealth. 23 Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it will be for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!"**

Great wealth can be good. But, they can also make things hard. The more money you have, the greater the temptation is to trust and rely on them. Look at the parable of the rich man and poor Lazarus. Or, look what Jesus said: **Matthew 6:24 "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."**

This is not to say that must be poor to have eternal life. NOT AT ALL! Abraham was probably one of the richest men of his time. So too was King David. But they weren't saved because of their riches, they were justified by faith. This man went away from Jesus because he couldn't leave all he had and follow Him. He had too much to walk away from.

What does real wealth look like then? **For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich. (2Co 8:9 NKJ)** Jesus gave up real riches. He left the Father's throne to come to earth and be man. He allowed Himself to be mistreated by sinful hands and be crucified. Just a few short verses after our text, He tells His disciples just that. That was the very same journey He was about to make when this man came up to Him! Why would He do all of that? So that we may become truly rich. We are made rich and righteous through the blood of the Holy Lamb of God!

This was hard for the disciples to understand. The fact the Jesus said it was hard for those who had

riches to enter the kingdom of heaven simply amazed them. It was a prevailing thought that those who had riches were particularly blessed by God. It was something that Jesus corrected all the time. Riches aren't riches apart from Jesus. Wealth apart from faith is a hinderance to it, as this man demonstrates.

This was hard for the disciples to understand. But they didn't know what hard was. Not yet. **"Children, how hard it is for those who trust in their riches to enter the kingdom of God! 25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." 26 They were even more astonished and said to one another, "Who then can be saved?"**

They are addressed as children here. We had the beginning of this chapter as our gospel reading last Sunday. Jesus said in that text: **"Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. 15 "Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it." (Mar 10:14-15 NKJ)**

These children had much to learn. But the beauty of children is in what they know. They know that they can trust mom and dad. What Jesus says here is a trustworthy thing. It's hard for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom. It's hard because of their trust in riches. It's a big obstacle that needs to be removed. You can't trust in riches. They can evaporate and there is only so much that they can buy. To enter into the kingdom, you need to trust in Christ's riches, His merits, and not in your own. That's why it's like a camel going through an eye of a needle.

But it's not impossible. Hard, yes. But it's hard for anyone, no matter how wealthy, to enter into the kingdom. The fact of the matter is that no matter who you are or how wealthy you are, we all trust in our riches, be they material or otherwise. There are all kinds of things that make it hard to leave and follow after Jesus. Riches are an easy one. But so is literally anything else. The devil can use anything in this life

that we have been given and tempt us to focus on them instead of focusing on Jesus' work and word.

The disciples think, "if it's hard for the rich, will then who at all can be saved?" **27 Jesus looked at them and said, "For people, it is impossible, but not for God, because all things are possible for God."**

It is impossible for man to enter the kingdom of God. Why is it impossible? Because it requires a complete keeping of the law. For man this truly is impossible. We aren't just "not good" at the keeping the law. We are total utter failures at it. No man could ever do all the demands and requirements of the Law. The disciple's assessment was correct? **"Who then can be saved?"**

But one man did. The impossible was made possible by God becoming man. Jesus obeyed the Law perfectly. It's simply mind blowing to fully understand that. Whereas we screw up and sin constantly, Jesus never did even once. And then He died so that we could have that perfection credited to us instead. Jesus made the impossible not just possible for us, He made it a certainty!

Is it better to earn something or be given something? We like earning things. It makes us feel good about ourselves. It gives us a sense of pride and accomplishment. But somethings we are not capable of earning. We can't earn salvation. There is nothing we can do to inherit eternal life. You can try. But if you are a human, you will fail. Our sin is ever before us.

But the beauty of grace is that it is a gift! It is underserved because we are every bit as underserving. Salvation isn't something that we can earn. Only Jesus could. And only Jesus can give you eternal life. When Jesus calls us, we shouldn't walk away sad like that man did. Instead, we should drop to our knees and admit we are incapable of being remotely good. Then the Good Teacher, the Good Shepherd picks you up, and says, "Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven you!" All praise be to Jesus, who makes impossibly sinful people like us eternally saved through His love for us! AMEN!!!