

“What You Must Do to Inherit Eternal Life”
(Mark 10:17-31)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. This morning,
 - a. We return to Mark’s Gospel,
 - b. And the final instructions Jesus
 - (i) Was giving His disciples
 - (ii) As He was heading towards Jerusalem
 - (iii) There to lay down His life for you.
2. As a reminder,
 - a. In this chapter,
 - b. The Lord has dealt with
 - (i) The permanence of marriage,
 - (a) And yet in light of sin
 - (b) The grounds for divorce and remarriage;
 - (ii) And the relationship
 - (a) Jesus has to the children
 - (b) Of believing parents:
 - (1) They’re not automatically saved,
 - (2) But the kingdom does belong to them
 - (3) By way of promise.
 - (4) Our work as parents
 - (5) Is to bring them to inherit this kingdom
 - (6) Through faith in Jesus Christ.

B. Preview.

1. To bring this message home even more clearly,
 - a. Mark now records another encounter Jesus has
 - b. With a man seeking eternal life –
 - c. The rich young ruler –
 - d. To show that you may only inherit heaven
 - e. By trusting in Jesus Christ alone.
2. This morning, let’s consider two things:
 - a. First, if you would inherit eternal life, you must be willing to give up everything you have – especially your own righteousness – and follow Jesus.
 - b. Second, if you are willing to give everything up to follow Jesus, you will gain far more than you will ever lose.

II. Sermon.

A. First, if you would inherit eternal life, you must be willing to give up everything you have – especially your own righteousness – and follow Jesus.

1. Let's begin with the man's question:

“Good teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life” (v. 17)?

a. It's interesting

(i) That Jesus first challenges

(ii) What he calls Him: Good.

(a) “No one is good but God alone.”

(b) Was Jesus denying He was God? No.

(1) He was asking the ruler

(2) Whether he believed He was God.

(3) Apparently he didn't.

(iii) This is an interesting question:

(a) Jesus didn't challenge everyone on this point.

(b) But He did this man

(c) Presumably because of what he said.

(iv) Why was it important that he believe this?

(a) Because this is what you must believe

(b) If you are to be saved.

(v) Is it enough to believe

(a) That Jesus is only a man?

(b) That He is merely a creature?

(c) No.

(1) If He is anything less than God –

(2) The true God –

(3) Then He can't save you.

(4) He's not the true Jesus.

(vi) Jesus said to the Pharisees

(a) In John's Gospel,

(b) “Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am *He*, you will die in your sins” (John 8:24).

(1) You must believe

(2) That Jesus is the eternal God,

(3) The covenant God of Israel,

(4) Yahweh, whose name means “I Am,”

(5) Because that is who He is.

(c) Do you believe

(1) Jesus is Yahweh incarnate –

(2) God become man?

(3) You must if you are to be saved.

- b. This may also explain
 - (i) Why Jesus answered him the way He did
 - (a) When the young man asked
 - (b) What he had to do
 - (c) To inherit eternal life.
 - (ii) We might expect Jesus to say,
 - (a) “Believe in Me,”
 - (b) Or “Believe on the Son of Man.”
 - (iii) Perhaps because
 - (a) This young man didn’t know
 - (b) Who Jesus was – that He was the Messiah –
 - (c) He also didn’t know
 - (d) That He needed a Redeemer.
 - (e) He calls Him “good teacher,”
 - (f) Not, “the Christ.”
 - (iv) And so Jesus shows him.
 - (a) When the man didn’t answer His question
 - (b) About whether or not He was God,
 - (c) He pointed him to the commandments.
 - (1) Without the Messiah,
 - (2) There’s only one other way to heaven:
 - (3) And that is perfect obedience.
 - (4) That’s what God requires:
 - (5) You must be perfect.
 - (6) That’s what this young man
 - (7) Was attempting to become –
 - (8) As also the majority of the Jews.
 - (9) When Jesus listed the commandments,
 - (10) The young man believed
 - (11) He had kept them all
 - (12) From his youth up (v. 20).
- c. What he believed isn’t so unusual.
 - (i) Most believe the same today.
 - (ii) If you were to ask most people
 - (a) Whether they believed
 - (1) They will be in heaven
 - (2) When they die,
 - (3) Most would say yes.
 - (b) And if you asked them why they would,
 - (1) They would say
 - (2) Because they’re good enough –

- (A) Their good works
- (B) Will outweigh their bad.

(iii) Now it is true

- (a) That if you were good enough
- (b) God would accept you.
- (c) But you need to understand
 - (1) That you must be perfect –
 - (2) From the time you come into this world,
 - (3) To the time you leave,
 - (4) You must do everything right
 - (5) And nothing wrong
 - (6) According to God's standards, not yours.

(iv) But you can't do this.

- (a) You came into this world guilty,
- (b) And you've done nothing
 - (1) But add to that guilt
 - (2) Since you've come.
 - (3) Paul writes,
 - (A) "There is none righteous,
 - (B) Not even one" (Rom. 3:10).
 - (C) You can't save yourself
 - (D) Through your works.

(v) There is only One

- (a) Who has obeyed God perfectly:
- (b) And that is Jesus!
- (c) And that's why
- (d) You must trust Him to save you.

2. Now Jesus wasn't insensitive

a. To this young man's plight.

- (i) Here was a child of Abraham,
- (ii) One of His own (John 1:11).
- (iii) Jesus loved him.
 - (a) The word Mark uses is agape.
 - (b) This is the kind of love the Lord has
 - (c) Even for the children of His believing children.
 - (d) It doesn't mean
 - (1) That he was acceptable to God as he was.
 - (2) It just means the Lord cared about him.

b. But the real question was not

- (i) Whether the Lord loved him,
- (ii) But whether this young man loved Him,

- (iii) Or was willing to love Him
 - (iv) To the degree he should.
 - (v) There was only one way to find out:
 - (a) Would he give up
 - (b) That which was most precious to him?
 - (c) The idol that held the first place in his heart?
 - (d) Would he part with his wealth?
- c. Jesus put him to the test: “One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me” (v. 21).
- (i) Now did Jesus mean to say
 - (a) That this man lacked only one thing?
 - (b) Was he just one step away from perfection?
 - (c) No, and yes.
 - (ii) In one sense, no:
 - (a) He had never really kept any of the commandments.
 - (b) In a way that God would approve.
 - (c) What he did always fell short,
 - (d) Especially in his love for his neighbor.
 - (iii) But in another sense, yes.
 - (a) There was just one thing
 - (b) He was lacking
 - (c) And that was love.
 - (1) If he had this,
 - (2) He would love God and his neighbor.
 - (3) If he had this,
 - (4) He would be able to do
 - (5) What Jesus asked him to do
 - (6) For God’s glory and the good of his neighbor.
 - (A) He would sell his possessions,
 - (B) Give his proceeds to the poor,
 - (C) And trust and follow Jesus,
 - (D) Just as Jesus told him to.
- d. How does your love measure up?
- (i) What if Jesus asked the same of you?
 - (ii) What if He asked you
 - (a) To give up all your possessions?
 - (b) To give up what was most precious to you?
 - (c) Could you do it?
 - (iii) This is what He asks of you.
 - (a) He said on another occasion,

- (b) “So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions” (Luke 14:33).
- (iv) If you are to be His disciples,
 - (a) If you would follow Him in this life,
 - (b) And enter at last into heaven,
 - (c) You must be willing
 - (d) To give up everything you have.
- (v) Do you love Him enough to do this?
 - (a) Or is this the one thing you lack?
 - (b) You must love Him this much,
 - (c) If you would follow Him.
- (vi) Sadly, this young man didn’t.
 - (a) “But at these words he was saddened, and he went away grieving, for he was one who owned much property” (v. 22).
 - (b) He loved his wealth more than Jesus.
 - (c) His possessions possessed his heart.
 - (1) And so he held onto them,
 - (2) And let go of Jesus,
 - (3) And his soul was lost.
- (vii) Letting go of everything you have
 - (a) Is one of the hardest things Jesus calls us to do –
 - (b) Especially, if you have a lot of things.
 - (c) Jesus said to His disciples, “How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!” (v. 23).
- (viii) If you didn’t know what Jesus said here,
 - (a) You might think it was easier for the rich,
 - (b) As the disciples did.
 - (1) When they heard this,
 - (2) They were amazed at His words.
 - (3) After all, who has more leisure to seek the Lord,
 - (4) And more resources to help the poor,
 - (5) Than the rich?
- (ix) Jesus didn’t leave it there.
 - (a) He said further, “Children, how hard 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 man to enter the kingdom of God” (vv. 24-25).
 - (b) Well that did it!
 - (1) How hard is it for a camel
 - (2) To go through the eye of a needle?
 - (A) He’s not talking here about a gate in Jerusalem

- (B) That was difficult for camels to pass through.
 - (C) He's talking about a literal camel
 - (D) Going through the eye of a literal needle.
 - (E) The eye of a needle was bigger in those days than now,
 - (F) But not that much bigger.
- (c) How hard is it for a rich man to enter the kingdom?
- (1) It's impossible.
 - (A) And if it's impossible for him,
 - (B) What chance did they have?
 - (2) "They were even more astonished and said to Him,
 - (A) 'Then who can be saved?'"
 - (B) "Looking at them, Jesus said, 'With people it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God'" (v. 27).
- (d) The fact is you can't do it.
- (1) You will never be good enough
 - (2) For God to accept you.
 - (3) You will never be able in your own strength
 - (4) To love Him enough.
 - (5) And even if you could,
 - (6) You could never undo all the sin
 - (7) You've already committed.
- (e) You can't save yourself!
- (1) There's nothing you can do to inherit eternal life.
 - (2) But what's impossible for you
 - (3) Is possible with God.
 - (A) God sent His Son into the world
 - (B) To save lost sinners like you and me.
 - (C) He kept the commandments perfectly.
 - (D) He loved His Father with a perfect love,
 - (E) And His neighbor as Himself.
 - (F) And He went to the cross
 - (G) To pay for the sins of all who will trust in Him.
 - (4) If you are to inherit eternal life,
 - (A) You must trust Jesus to save you.
 - (B) He is your only hope.
 - (5) This is in fact what the disciples did.
 - (A) If they hadn't,
 - (B) Peter would never have been able to say
 - (C) What he said next,
 - (D) "Behold, we have left everything and followed You" (v. 28).

- (E) “We did what you asked this man, Lord.
- (F) We left everything behind as you commanded
- (G) Because we know You are the Messiah.”

- (6) The only way they could have done this
 - (A) Was by God’s grace,
 - (B) And the way you can know
 - (C) That the Lord has mercifully changed your heart
 - (D) Is that you too will be willing
 - (E) To give to the Lord all you possess
 - (F) And follow Him –
 - (G) Not that you must do what He asked of this man –
 - (H) You don’t need to sell everything
 - (I) And give it to the poor.
 - (J) But you must recognize that all you have is His
 - (K) And be willing to let go of it at a moment’s notice.
 - (L) Your heart must belong to Him,
 - (M) Not to your possessions.

B. Second, if you are willing to give everything up to follow Jesus, you will gain far more than you will ever lose.

1. If you hold onto everything you have,
 - a. You will lose it all,
 - b. Along with your soul.
 - c. But what if you do give it all to Him?
 - (i) What if you give Him your heart?
 - (ii) What if you recognize His sovereignty over all you have?
 - (iii) What will you gain?
 - (iv) What does He promise you?
2. Jesus says, “Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel’s sake, but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life” (vv. 29-30).
 - a. If you give up all you have
 - b. You will gain much more –
 - (i) Not as the health and wealth preachers say:
 - (a) “You give your little to us
 - (b) And God will bless you with much more!”
 - (ii) He will give you the true riches
 - (a) He has reserved in heaven
 - (b) For all who love Him:
 - (c) He will give you eternal life!

- (iii) But He will also give you riches on earth:
 - (a) If you have to give up
 - (1) Your unbelieving family members,
 - (2) If you have to let go
 - (3) Of your home or other possessions
 - (4) For Jesus' sake,
 - (b) He will give you much more:
 - (1) Fathers and mothers,
 - (2) Brothers and sisters,
 - (3) Even houses.
 - (4) Your family will be Christ's brothers and sisters,
 - (5) And their homes will be yours
 - (6) When you truly need them.
 - (iv) Of course, there will be one more thing
 - (a) You can count on: persecution.
 - (1) If you take up the cross of Christ
 - (2) You will suffer as He suffered.
 - (3) You will have your share of this
 - (4) Along with the blessings.
 - (5) If the world hated Him,
 - (6) It will hate you as well (John 15:19).
 - (b) But don't forget what Paul writes,
 - (1) "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (Rom. 8:18).
 - (2) It's worth whatever you must pay –
 - (A) Loss of possessions,
 - (B) Abundance of suffering,
 - (C) Even the loss of life –
 - (D) To enter into glory at last.
 - (c) Don't forget as well
 - (1) That to the degree you suffer
 - (2) To that degree you will be rewarded.
3. Finally, so that they didn't become
- a. Proud of the fact that they were willing to do this
 - (i) When this young wealthy ruler was not,
 - (ii) Jesus makes this closing statement,
 - (iii) "But many *who are* first will be last, and the last, first" (v. 31).
 - b. They may have been called into the kingdom first,
 - (i) But that doesn't mean they will be first.

- (ii) There were others the Lord was yet to call
 - (iii) Who would receive even more honor than they:
 - (iv) The most notable example being the apostle Paul.
- c. Whether you come into the kingdom at all,
- (i) As well as what position you will have,
 - (ii) Is entirely in God's hands.
 - (iii) So never praise yourself
 - (iv) For your salvation or your accomplishments.
 - (v) Make sure you give all the glory to God. Amen.

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