

**Then Who Can Be Saved?**  
**October 11, 2009**  
**Mark 10:17 – 31**

<sup>17</sup> As Jesus started to leave, a man ran to him and fell on his knees before Jesus. The man asked, "Good teacher, what must I do to have life forever?"

<sup>18</sup> Jesus answered, "Why do you call me good? Only God is good. <sup>19</sup> You know the commands: 'You must not murder anyone. You must not be guilty of adultery. You must not steal. You must not tell lies about your neighbor. You must not cheat. Honor your father and mother.' "

<sup>20</sup> The man said, "Teacher, I have obeyed all these things since I was a boy."

<sup>21</sup> Jesus, looking at the man, loved him and said, "There is one more thing you need to do. Go and sell everything you have, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come and follow me."

<sup>22</sup> He was very sad to hear Jesus say this, and he left sorrowfully, because he was rich.

<sup>23</sup> Then Jesus looked at his followers and said, "How hard it will be for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!"

<sup>24</sup> The followers were amazed at what Jesus said. But he said again, "My children, it is very hard to enter the kingdom of God! <sup>25</sup> 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."

<sup>26</sup> The followers were even more surprised and said to each other, "Then who can be saved?"

<sup>27</sup> Jesus looked at them and said, "For people this is impossible, but for God all things are possible."

<sup>28</sup> Peter said to Jesus, "Look, we have left everything and followed you."

<sup>29</sup> Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, all those who have left houses, brothers, sisters, mother, father, children, or farms for me and for the Good News <sup>30</sup> will get more than they left. Here in this world they will have a hundred times more homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children, and fields. And with those things, they will also suffer for their belief. But in the age that is coming they will have life forever. <sup>31</sup> Many who are first now will be last in the future. And many who are last now will be first in the future."

**This is the Word of God and It can be trusted.**  
**Thanks be to God.**

Have you ever been so in love that when he or she was near you, nothing else seemed to matter. Scott L Franklin successfully captured just this sort of moment he scripted a few lines of poetic elegance in 2005. His poem, *As I look Into Your Eyes*, reads as follows.

As I look into your eyes  
all that seems important is trivial now.

As I look into your eyes  
there is no hustle and bustle of others on the street. We are the only two here.

As I look into your eyes  
there is no deadline to meet, no meeting to run to, no project to think of.

As I look into your eyes  
I can truly see the future, a future filled with love and happiness.

As I look into your eyes  
I see what love is, I see what is to be.

As I look into your eyes  
I see just the two of us learning to live and be as one.

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Have you ever looked at someone in that way? Has anyone ever looked at you with such love and endearing that even in a crowded room you are the only one that they notice? Imagine how Jesus might look upon us each day. What do you picture the expression on Jesus' face to be each time he looks at us and what words would He attach to those expressions? Would His response to us be as poetic and uplifting as the words we read by Scott Franklin or would we be met with stern correction as Peter was just a

few Sunday's ago? Today's gospel reading gives us some insight into the nature of our Lord and drawing our attention to His words, we find ourselves better equipped to answer these questions.

I am sure that many of us can relate to the man in our text today. We have come into this community of faith seeking today; seeking to find comfort and encouragement from our brokenness. Some of us here today may even be seeking answers to deeper questions; questions that speak to gaining an understanding of our own self worth, the purpose of existence and the allowance of pain and suffering in our world today. Whichever end of the spectrum we find ourselves on this morning, I believe that we have all come seeking, at one time or another, a response to our need to figure out exactly what we need to do to inherit eternal life.

We have spoken a great deal about gaining relationship and establishing reconciliation with our God and our Creator; about seeking God's will for our lives and praying, not so that our God can hear our words, but that we may learn to sit quietly and listen for the words of God. We, as a community of faith, have knelt together in this house and we have acknowledged that Jesus is "good" through our time of praise and worship and in giving our time, our talents and our offerings. Why else would we be here? If we felt that being at New Day was not something good, something that would help us to improve our lives and relationships with not only God but with one another, then we would not be here today. Certainly we are

not here for entertainment or worldly comfort. On cool autumn mornings like those we have been experience over the last couple of weeks, our warm bed coverings and the presence of our partners by our side can provide a lot of warmth and comfort. If we truly believed that we had the rightful choice to lie in bed and snuggle or get up and drive to church, many of us would still be at home this morning. Like the man in our text, however, we have come here today hoping to have Jesus look at us and speak to us about what we must do to gain His favor, to meet His call and most importantly, to inherit eternal life.

The gospel author tells us that, As Jesus started to leave; this man ran before Jesus, fell to his knees and he asked of Him the same question that many of us are asking today, ". . . what must I do to have life forever?"

Are you surprised by Jesus' immediate reaction; not His words, but His reaction? We are told that Jesus not only looks at the man who has fallen before Him, but we are told, as one translation describes, that Jesus looked upon him with "genuine love." I don't believe we should be surprised, at all. Prior to this event, everyone who had come to Jesus in Mark's gospel had come to Jesus wanting something; healing, food, and power. Some, such as the Pharisees, even came to Jesus wanting to trap Him in His words and deeds. In all that Mark tells us was sought by all those who encountered Jesus, good or bad, none of these things were why Jesus had come. Recall that the beginning of Mark's gospel tells us that Jesus came to preach a

message of repentance and to spread a message of the nearness of God's Kingdom; a Kingdom that we as members of the International Christian Community of Churches have been called to break forth; in our lives, our families, to our neighbors and especially amongst this community of faith. Here, at last, was a man who has humbled himself before Christ, even to the point of being on his Knees before Him, and is asking what needs to be done to inherit eternal life; to have life forever.

Finally, after all of the accounts of miracles and teachings, after all the time devoted to the disciples; their arguing, their consistent disbelief and their inability to understand, finally someone gets it. And Jesus looks upon this man with genuine love. Now I know what some of you are thinking. The Bible has taught us that we are saved by grace and not by works, that is, we can do nothing aside from believing in the death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to ensure our salvation. But I think that the author of the book of James really had something important to say when he wrote, "Faith without works is dead." Grace does save us, of this there is no doubt, but to be fully vested in our salvation we must respond to it by doing something. This man has recognized this need to become fully vested in his relationship with Jesus and is ready, so he thinks, to do whatever it takes.

Jesus is looking at each of us today with that same genuine love spoken about in our scripture reading today. He loves that you are in church

today. He loves that you sing have sung his praises this morning, He that you have lifted your hands to Him today, Jesus loves that you are digging into His word and that you, too, are willing to do whatever Jesus asks of you today. If we seek His will and listen for His voice in our lives, then Jesus will guide us, tell us what to do and what we each lack individually to inherit eternal life.

Though Jesus has genuine love for this man, recall His words to him. “. . . Go and sell everything you have, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come and follow me.” How contradictory this must have seemed to the man. Clearly the man didn’t hear this as loving. We are told that his face falls and he leaves sad. Where is our happy ending, where is the great miracle we have come to expect and love in the stories we have been told concerning Jesus? Here is a man with his heart in the right place, a man who Jesus has expressed love for, and he does what? . . . he walks away.

Jesus hasn’t asked this man to do anything impossible, nor has he refused to grant this man an answer to his question. Jesus has responded; He has told this man what he must do to inherit eternal life and the man does not like the answer; he walks away.

Now let me see if I can make a few things clear here. Jesus’ response was not a contradiction to the genuine love He had for this man, in fact, it was probably the most affirming, loving response Jesus could have given

him. John Heeringa reminds us in his sermon *Good Advice, Better Advice* that "Jesus came to free us, to free us from sin, and to free us from ourselves." Nothing binds us more to our need to sin than our dependence upon wealth and all the *stuff* associated with it.

I challenge you to go anywhere today where there are crowds of people; a shopping mall, your favorite restaurant, huddled around the coffee pot in your company's lounge; and listen to what people are talking about. If I could be so bold, I would venture to say that you will hear most people talking about money or possessions. A new outfit they have purchased, a new job making more money than they did before, new cell phones, big screen TVs, a new home, their concern about a bracelet that they've lost (not because of its sentimental value, but because it cost a "x" number of dollars to buy). I used to work with a woman who couldn't tell you about any outfit she had on without telling you where she bought it and how much she paid for it.

What do you talk about at the dinner table or in the lounge at work? Do you talk about "possessions" or do you talk what spirit you "posses" within your heart? Do you speak about *Healthcare* and *Insurance* or do you speak about the *healthiness* of your spirit and the *Assurance* of having God in your life.

Jesus' invitation to the man, the invitation to "follow me" is so important to our understanding of God's love for us. On one level, its

important because of the sheer simplicity and obviousness of what Jesus asks of this man. On another level, it speaks in direct opposition of what we are told daily by the world around us. Jesus knew what he said to this man was said in love, genuine love, but He also knew that it was tough love. The disciples, as most of us have grown to expect, missed the point.

Listen again closely to the disciple's amazement and Jesus words. After the man walks away, we are told that, "Jesus looked at his followers and said, "How hard it will be for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!" The disciples were amazed at this because wealth was thought to be a sign of God's favor, a sign of God's blessing. It was believed by many of Jesus' time, just as it is believed by many today, that wealth would free them to spend less time struggling and more time living their life. For the Jewish Community and for many of us, that leads to the conclusion that we would then have more time to spend with God. If you have ever seen the musical, *Fiddler on the Roof*, then you would be familiar with what I am talking about here. The main character, Tevye, sings if he were a rich man then he would have time to pray and would study the Holy Book seven hours a day.

Sadly, however, I am not convinced that this would be true of the majority of us today. Those with wealth have a tendency to get caught up in growing and preserving their wealth just like the people without wealth get caught up trying to figure out how to gain wealth. The time we should have for our God gets consumed by our desire to focus on ourselves. When Jesus

speaks of the difficult task of the rich man getting into heaven, He does not say it is impossible, rather He says that apart from God this is impossible.

“Then who can be saved?” Without God’s involvement, without a relationship with Him, with only the ways of man to guide and direct us, no one can be saved. However, with God in our lives, with our focus on God’s will and with an awareness that we must “follow Jesus,” and not turn our heads and walk away, all things are possible. “Seek first God’s kingdom and what God wants. Then all your needs will be met . . . don’t worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow will have its own worries. Each day has enough trouble of its own. (Matthew 6:33-34).

We must examine our lives, our possessions, our wealth and figure out if it is holding us back from following Jesus or if it is already in Jesus hands. If we are being held back from following Jesus, let go and give it up. Live in the freedom Jesus came to give you. Don’t however abandon “stuff” for the sake of abandonment, give all you have; your time, your talent, your offerings, your thoughts and your deeds to the work of Breaking Forth God’s Kingdom, not as you see fit, but as you are lead by God. In doing so, according to His will, Jesus assures us that he can multiply it 100 times over.

As you move into the days to come, consider what it is that God will have you give to your church and to those in need around you; not because of the church’s need but because of your needs. What is it you lack? The one thing the man in our text lacked was freedom from possession and

wealth. If that is true of you, give it up and put it to use in God's Kingdom. I'm not saying clear out your bank accounts and give it to the church or to sell all you have and give it to the poor. What I am saying is that in order to gain eternal life, you must be free to follow Christ knowing that as Christ looks at you, He is looking upon you with genuine love. Through the lens of the cross we know that Jesus looks at us and advises us with love in all that He instructs us to do. Trust in Him and He will never fail you.

Let us pray:

[prayer]

Amen.