

Jesus is Good

We're continuing our series in Mark's Gospel, asking ourselves the question Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do you say I am?" And what difference who he is makes to your life.

We read today from Mark 10:17-31

The Rich and the Kingdom of God

17 As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

18 "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone. 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, honour your father and mother.'"

20 "Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy."

21 Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

22 At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

23 Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!"

24 The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! 25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."

26 The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, "Who then can be saved?"

27 Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God."

28 Then Peter spoke up, "We have left everything to follow you!"

29 "Truly I tell you," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel 30 will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. 31 But many who are first will be last, and the last first."

Let us pray...

We use the word good quite loosely, and quite often our use of good is accompanied by a qualification which suggests that all isn't so good after all. So, in response to the question, did you have a good time? one might say I had good time, more or less. Most of us would describe ourselves as good people but would be mindful of our not so good traits. It seems good is often with limitation.

The rich man refers to Jesus as good teacher and it is an apt description but the extent to which this is the case is lost on the man, thus Jesus asks a rhetorical question, "Why do you call me good?"

'Good' is a designation reserved, in the absolute sense, for God. This is the point Jesus was making

when he said, “No one is good—except God alone”. The man was ignorant to Jesus’ divine nature but everything in Jesus’ life, his ministry, his teaching, and his works points to his goodness in absolute terms and by extension his identity as the Christ.

The man asked an important question of Jesus, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Based on Jesus’ identity, the man could not have found anyone better to ask such a fundamental question. I have read this passage several times before, as I am sure many of you have, but the thing that struck me the most whilst reflecting on it for today is the desperation with which the man approached Jesus.

This was not an arrogant or disingenuous approach, as often seen with the Pharisees, the religious leaders of the day, nor was it an engagement between perceived intellectual equals on a philosophical point. No, this was a man desperate for the truth, the reading says he ran up to him and fell on his knees before him “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

If we truly want to inherit eternal life, we must first recognise who Jesus is, for the gift of eternal life rests with him. In John 14:6 Jesus says “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me”. Jesus in this passage goes on to make the point that if you have seen him, you have seen the father and that every thing he teaches comes from the father and on His authority...Good teacher He is. So, if Jesus is giving us specific instructions on any topic, let alone how one can secure eternal life, it would make sense for us to take careful note of what he says.

Jesus in answering the rich man’s question on how to gain eternal life first points him to the observation of the commandments, observation of the law. The man declares that he had observed these from he was a boy...but there was something missing. He knew it himself, the manner of his approach and the question itself pointed to that fact. Jesus gives instructions which points to the heart of the issue, the stumbling block to salvation in the man’s life, his love of money.

Jesus, because of who he is, sees right through us. We can go to church every Sunday, we can keep up appearances we can say all the right things but with Jesus, there is no hiding the truth about who we really are. He can see behind the so-called good actions in our lives and see the true state of our hearts, and this exchange demonstrates that perfectly.

Jesus’ response to the true state of this man’s heart is mind blowing. You see, Jesus’ response to our failings and our sin is not condemnation but compassion and so verse 21 says **“Jesus looked at him and loved him”**. In what ways do you fall short in your life today? Know this, Jesus does not condemn you in fact his intention is to save you from condemnation. As John 3: 16 & 17 says “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not

perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”.

Although at first glance the man had observed the law, in reality, his life when measured against the law fell short. Jesus identifies the sin in his life and reveals it with his instructions to the man in verse 21 “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” We are told that “at this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth” Verse 22.

The man was convinced he had kept the commandments since his youth but in reality, he fell at the first hurdle. In Exodus 20 God lays out the ten commandments and begins with this:

1 “And God spoke all these words:

2 “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

3 “You shall have no other gods before me.

4 “You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. 5 You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God.

The man had made his wealth an idol for he loved it more than he loved God and in doing so he violated the law. That made him a sinner, a sinner in need of the salvation only Jesus could offer. He was not able to see Jesus’ divine nature and answer his call to follow him at the expense of all else. The salvation which he had appeared to seek so desperately was right before him, but his love of money proved a stumbling block...by turning away from Jesus and holding on to his wealth he made his choice.

What is your attitude, what is my attitude towards money today? There is nothing inherently wrong with money or possessing it, but if we fail to recognise that our money, our possessions our talents belong to God and that we are but stewards of these things we are in danger of allowing them to take pride of place in our lives. These things must be seen primarily as tools for the furtherance of God’s kingdom here on earth, we must make them and ourselves available to be used for the advancement of the gospel.

How hard do you find it to tithe, to give back to God but a portion of that which he has entrusted to you? How hard do you find it to make time to serve in the Church and in the mission field? Are our careers more important? What is it in our lives, in our agenda, in our will that we are putting ahead of following Jesus?

Jesus warns of just how hard it is for the wealthy to enter the Kingdom of God even giving the impossible act of a camel passing through the eye of a needle a greater chance. You see, the more we have is often the less likely we are to see our need of Jesus. Money and possessions in this world are often accompanied with power and influence and we can very easily begin to think of ourselves more highly than we are. We begin to act as though we are above others and become self-seeking and self-serving in the pursuit of yet more wealth and power.

Jesus warns us that many who are first will be last, and the last first. You see, in God's economy the more we give up is the more we gain. It is in putting to death our lives - that is, our will, our agenda, our way - that we can gain life in its fulness through Jesus Christ.

It is God who makes this seemingly impossible task possible. Through the ministry of his Holy Spirit the truth of the Gospel is made real to us. The Gospel, the good news about who Jesus is, is what opens the door to eternal life. Jesus calls us to follow him at the expense of everything else. He walked away from much greater wealth than we could ever do. 2 Corinthians 8:9 says this "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich".

Where are you this morning? Have you come in desperation, having this deep-rooted sense that despite appearances things are not quite right in your life? As you confront the truth of who Jesus is, that he is good, that he is God, made flesh, his blood poured out for you, for me, for us, raised to life that through Him we might have life...what will your response be?

What 'riches' stand in your way today. Is it your Job, your money, your partner, your family? We are all tempted to place emphasis on things that are not God, to make idols of them, to allow them to be stumbling blocks to our full and complete surrender to Jesus Christ. Today, He stands ready to accept you with open arms, he looks at you and he loves you. He does not condemn you, but he is not going to lower the bar of full and total surrender to his will and his way.

I am reminded of that song which say "Yes, Lord yes, to you will and to your way. I say yes, Lord yes, I will trust you and obey. When your Spirit speaks to me, with my whole heart I'll agree and my answer will be yes, Lord yes.

What will your answer be this morning? Either way you are making a choice.

May God grant you the grace to choose Jesus for He is Good!