

Valley Bible Church
Sermon Notes for July 23, 2017

Riches and the Kingdom
Mark 10:17-27

I. The disappointing exchange regarding the kingdom of God (10:17-22)

A. The determined man (10:17)

And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

- “And as he was setting out on his journey”
 - Jesus had recently stopped with His disciples and blessed little children
 - He was just starting to go out and leave on His way to Judea and Jerusalem (Mark 10:1)
- “... a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him...”
 - This passage is referred to as Jesus’ dialogue with the “rich young ruler”
 - Later in this text, the man was described as rich (Mark 10:22)
 - The man was young (Matthew 19:20)
 - The man was a ruler (Luke 18:18)
 - There is urgency to this man’s question since he ran to Jesus
 - This man’s question was so important that he could not wait for another time, he had to inconvenience Jesus now!
- “... Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”
 - This man asked a huge question about eternal life
 - Eternal life permeates the passage before us
 - It appears that “inherit eternal life” (10:17), “enter the kingdom of God” (10:23, 24, 25), and “be saved” (10:26) are all being used synonymously
 - Briefly notice this man’s perspective on the subject
 - He is chiefly concerned with what he must *do* to inherit eternal life
 - “The rich man wanted to know what he must *do to inherit eternal life*, but Jesus had just finished teaching that eternal life was not earned but simply received (10:15).”¹

¹ NET Bible Study Note

- This is probably a sincere question from a man who wants affirmation of eternity

B. The daring man (10:18-20)

18 And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. 19 You know the commandments: ‘Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.’ ” 20 And he said to him, “Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth.”

- “And Jesus said to him, ‘Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone...’”
 - Was Jesus denying His perfection or Deity?
 - Obviously not! Instead, some have noted this as a subtle hint toward His Deity while testing this man to see if he would acknowledge it
 - Jesus is not interested in engaging in some mutual flattery, especially when this man is not good while Jesus Himself is in fact good
 - Jesus is setting up for what is to come in this interaction
 - This man approached this conversation thinking he was good (after all, he kept all the commandments since his youth!)
 - Jesus completely obliterated that thinking in this simple correction
 - No one is good, so don’t even try to claim that you have kept the commandments
 - No one is good, so there is nothing that you can “do” that makes you worthy of inheriting eternal life
 - Jesus is establishing the truth about the sinfulness of all mankind
 - Romans 3:10-12 “as it is written: ‘None is righteous, no, not one; 11 no one understands; no one seeks for God. 12 All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.’”
 - This literally reads: “No one is good except one—God.”
- “You know the commandments: ‘Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.’”
 - Jesus lists off six commands
 - 5 prohibitions and 1 command in the present imperative
 - 5 out of the 6 commands listed come from the 10 commandments

- These are the commands in regards to relating to one another
- Jesus states commandments 6, 7, 8, 9, an application of 10, and 5
- “Do not defraud”
 - The 10th commandment is “Do not covet” but Jesus says “Do not defraud”
 - Defraud - to deprive of a right, money, or property by fraud
 - Practically speaking, coveting leads to defrauding of others
 - Perhaps Jesus’ application of coveting is a precursor to this man’s sinful tendency
- “And he said to him, ‘Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth.’”
 - Man stops calling Jesus “good” and instead just “teacher”
 - Doesn’t seem like he believes Jesus to be the Son of God
 - Notice the man’s daring persistence after Jesus’ words
 - First, he says he has kept all these commands!?!
 - Who is so bold as to say that they have kept all the 10 commandments relating to others?!
 - Paul was righteous under the law and blameless (Phil. 3:6) in an external sense
 - However, internal motives and attitudes are countless and sufficient to condemn every human being
 - Second, he says he has kept all these commands from his youth!?!
 - “Judaism regarded the age of thirteen as the age when a man would have become responsible to live by God’s commands.”²
 - Really?! Had this man honored his parents since his youth?
- Amazingly, Jesus does not engage him on the details of keeping the commandments

C. The devastated man (10:21-22)

21 And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, “You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” 22 Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

- “And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him...”

² NET Bible Study Note

- The holy perfect Son of God looked at this sinful man and loved him!
- “You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.”
 - Phrase “one thing” is fronted emphasizing the one thing this man lacks, which turns out to be a huge thing
 - Notice the three commands in a row, (“Go” ... “sell” ... “give”)
 - This result will be that he will have heavenly treasure instead of earthly possessions
 - The final command is, “follow me”
 - This is not Jesus giving new teaching on how to enter into the Kingdom of God
 - This is another example of Jesus’ regular message
 - Mark 1:14-15 “Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, 15 and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.’”
 - Jesus’ message was a twofold message of “repentance” and “belief/faith”
 - This man needed to repent and turn from his love of money and riches
 - Thus the commands to “go, sell and give”
 - This man needed to express belief in Jesus alone
 - Thus the commands to “come and follow me”
- “Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.”
 - In response, this man was stunned or “disheartened by the saying”
 - This word carries the sense of shocked dismay
 - He was devastated by Jesus’ words
 - Why was he devastated?
 - Because he was obviously not willing to part from his earthly possessions
 - He had many earthly possessions rather than treasures in heaven
 - He was a wealthy man who probably owned much land

II. The difficult entrance into the kingdom of God (10:23-27)

A. The instruction (10:23-24)

23 *And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!”* 24 *And the disciples were amazed at his words.*

- “And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples”
 - Jesus considered the reactions of everyone around and He saw the potential to teach
 - Jesus particularly addresses His disciples
- “How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!”
 - Jesus speaks this principle about the wealthy as a first glimpse into the topic of money thus far in Mark’s gospel
 - While everyone must sacrifice in their own way to follow Jesus, there is still something unique about riches
 - Jesus boldly states that it will be specifically harder for the wealthy to enter the kingdom of God
- “And the disciples were amazed at his words.”
 - This instruction amazed the disciples
 - Why?
 - Their view of the rich was very different from Jesus’ view
 - They viewed the rich as blessed by God
 - It was a common Jewish perspective that riches were a sign of divine favor and blessing (Example of Job)
 - Proverbs 10:22 says, ‘The blessing of the Lord brings wealth.’
 - However, at the same time the Old Testament warns against the danger of riches and speaks against the rich who oppress the poor
 - In Christ’s day, the Jews had become convinced of only the positive aspects of wealth rather than the negative warnings

B. The illustration (10:25)

But Jesus said to them again, “Children, how difficult 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 a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.”

- “But Jesus said to them again, ‘Children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God!’”
 - Jesus had to speak “again” about the “difficulty” of entering the kingdom
 - This clearly was not a regular teaching that they had heard often
 - Notice that this mention of entering the kingdom says nothing about the rich entering the kingdom

- Generally speaking, it is difficult to enter the kingdom of God!
 - Jesus called the disciples “children”... why?
 - This is the only time Jesus calls the disciples, “Children” in Mark
 - This probably connects to what He just said about receiving the kingdom “like children” in Mark 10:15
 - This reminder fits perfectly with His teaching here; that is, it is impossible for man to gain entry into the kingdom on his own
 - It is only possible through God who gives it to man as a gift is given to a child
- “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.”
 - There is debate about what this specific camel illustration is referring to
 - Confusion between “camel” and “rope”?
 - Is the eye of a needle referring to the literal hole of a needle?
 - Is the eye of a needle referring to the needle gate in Jerusalem?
 - Any attempt to soften or change Jesus’ illustration is because people find it a little too ridiculous
 - But that’s the point! Let the illustration stand as a ridiculous picture of an impossible scenario
 - “As evidence that Jesus meant what he said are several rabbinic parallels that draw the equally absurd analogy of an elephant passing through the eye of a needle. While the elephant was the largest land animal of Mesopotamia (where the Babylonian Talmud was compiled), the camel was the largest in Israel. The eye of a needle was the smallest opening imaginable. The image of a camel trying to squeeze through one is delightfully absurd and impossible.”³
 - Why the ridiculous illustration?
 - Jesus was communicating that salvation is impossible without God’s action and saving hand

³ Strauss, 443-44

C. The impossibility (10:26-27)

26 *And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to him, "Then who can be saved?"* 27 *Jesus looked at them and said, "With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God."*

- “And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to him, ‘Then who can be saved?’”
 - The disciples were now exceedingly amazed
 - They asked the obvious question after such an illustration of impossibility, “Who can be saved?”
 - “Be saved” is another parallel for “entering the kingdom” or “inheriting eternal life”
 - If the blessed rich barely have a chance, who can come close to being saved?
- “Jesus looked at them and said,”
 - Again, Jesus looked at His immediate audience and spoke
 - This gaze was a dramatic pause and moment in this event
- “With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God.”
 - “With man it is impossible”
 - Salvation is the subject in v. 26
 - Man cannot work his way to eternal life with God
 - Man cannot leap the Grand Canyon to reach God
 - Any effort by man to train for such a leap would be futile
 - Jesus could not be more clear, “With man it is impossible”
 - However, he goes on to add, “but not with God”
 - “But not with God”
 - Salvation is not impossible for God
 - God is the One who grants salvation
 - He knows you are helpless
 - He has compassion and mercy upon you
 - He has the power to save you from your sin
 - He desires to bring glory to His Name
 - Exodus 34:6-7 “... The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, 7 keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity

of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.”

- “For all things are possible with God”
 - Since God can bring about salvation (spiritually raise the dead to life), then it follows that all things are possible with God
 - Surely there is nothing that rises up to the level of difficulty as salvation!
 - So too, can God redeem and save even the rich who have great difficulty entering the Kingdom