

Title: The Book of Mark: Part 29, "Who Then Can Be Saved?"

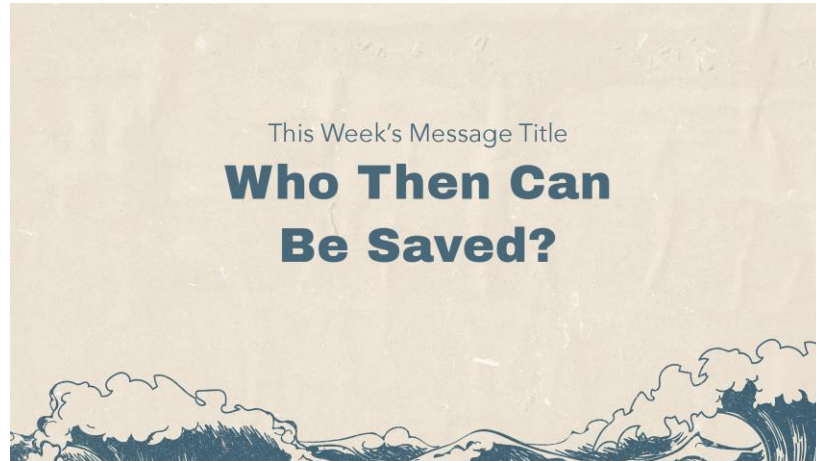
Speaker: Neil Chotai

Passage: Mark 10:17-31

Big idea: God's Grace saves us from the clutches of this world.



In Mark 10:17-31 we see a question that is posed to Jesus by the disciples that is actually going to be the title of my message.



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, honor 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."

Mark 10:17-31

BIG IDEA

God's Grace frees us from the clutches of **this world**.



Mark 10:17, “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?’”

This passage of scripture is linked all from the beginning of Mark 10, as Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem. As Jesus is travelling, all of a sudden, a man appears before him and falls on his knees before Jesus. Within this passage of scripture, we find out what kind of individual this man is.

He is rich, he is wealthy. In the other synoptic gospel writers of Matthew and Luke we find out that he is also young and a ruler. We believe that this man was influential because of the money that he had, probably he came from a rich family of influence. In that Jewish society he was a man of influence, perhaps a member of some type of official council or court.

He ascribes to Jesus the title “Good Teacher” which expressed a high regard for Jesus. Word must have gotten around that Jesus was a very interesting speaker of God's word.

Something must have happened to him to go to Jesus and ask him a very important question about eternal life. Remember this individual would have been Jewish, would have been brought up in the Hebrew ways. By asking this question about eternal life we assume that perhaps there was something missing from the teachings that he already had. What caused him to desperately run and seek out Jesus and to ask about the question not about a healing, not about a need that was of the physical realm but a question about eternal life?

Mark 10:18, “‘Why do you call me good?’ Jesus answered. ‘No one is good—except God alone.’”

Jesus does not answer the question directly. In fact, he answers the question by asking a question. The greeting this rich young ruler gave to Jesus was not a common reading. Jesus questions him by saying ‘why do you call me good?’ Good only comes from God. Now Jesus is not questioning his deity here, but he is wondering why this individual has called him good.

Jesus is telling him that before you give Jesus the title of good, you need to understand carefully what the implications are for you who recognized me as good.

We tend to use the word good very flippantly, but in fact the only one that is good is God. We may do good things because of the imprint that goodness has on us that comes from God, but we are in and of ourselves are not good, only God is good.

This man however seems to be sincere but is wanting more information about spiritual things. There is this yearning in him to know more because from what he has thus learned far, something is missing. And that is why he asked this question.

Mark 10:19, “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.’”

Jesus goes on and speaks to him about the Decalogue, that is the 10 commandments. He only concentrates on second half of the decalogue, the commandments that are ascribed concerning relationships among people as opposed to God (Exodus 20:12-17).

In the Jewish faith, it was the firm belief that anyone who kept the law would live (Deuteronomy 30:15-16). Jesus lists off murder, adultery, stealing, lying, defrauding (which is in respect to coveting), and honoring parents. In this listing of the commandments Jesus talks about the duty to a neighbour. If you keep your duty to your neighbour, you are following the first part of the decalogue which concentrates on the relationship and duty to God.

The man's view was that all you had to do was to keep commandments, that is keep the law. The law was there to show what our sin was like, and we had these laws from God to help us in our daily life to live in life worthy of a follower of God. However, no one could keep the entire law.

Mark 10:20, “‘Teacher,’ he declared, ‘all these I have kept since I was a boy.’”

Even though no one could keep the entire law this man states that he has kept all of the commandments that Jesus referred to. In all sincerity he believes that on the outside he has kept these commandments and is satisfied. However even though outwardly he is self-satisfied, on the inside, he was lacking something, and that is why he asks the question about eternal life. This man has kept the commandments since he was a boy, it probably refers to the age of 13 when every Jewish boy became a man at his bar mitzvah. At that point the boy then became responsible to live by God's commands.

Mark 10:21, 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.’”

In verse 21 Jesus looks at him and believes that he is sincere and seeking an answer about eternal life. What's more, Jesus looks at this man with love. Jesus loved this individual.

Jesus says that the man lacks one thing. This can be translated as one thing you need. Jesus is going deeper with this individual and it is not about keeping the law on the outside, but it is inward desire and commitment to following God. This man never lacked anything in his life that would cause him to kill or steal or covet. For a person like that it is easy to observe the commandments that are based on our outward expression but what he needed was to do, was look inward.

The one thing that prevented the young man from having eternal life was the security of his wealth. Jesus points a finger at a sensitive topic for him. And Jesus concentrates on this topic. What Jesus is saying here is that eternal life is not found in keeping the commandments and the law, but it is found in Jesus Christ himself.

That is why Jesus says to the young man who is rich to follow me. But before he follows Jesus, he must take all of his wealth and give to the poor. Now Jesus is not saying to us in this room that we have to sell everything to follow him. The issue is the man's stumbling block. This is a sensitive topic for him and for us too. The man must renounce the stumbling block and must not just say it but must act on it as well. He is holding on to earthly treasures, as opposed to having treasure in heaven.

The man's wealth, position, status, and comfort were his security from entering eternal life. What Jesus is saying is that we must not be attached to material things.

Mark 10:22, “At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.”

The man's response was total and utter disappointment. This is the only man in the New Testament that went away sad from the presence of Jesus. Many times, we see people coming to Jesus sad and they leave happy full of joy, but this is the opposite. The only thing the man could do was to renounce his wealth - to remove that stumbling block and to become a disciple of Christ. To obey Jesus was too much of a risk for the man because he relied on his wealth. He did not realize that obedience to God brought total joy and disobedience would bring great sadness and sorrow.

Mark 10:23, "Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, 'How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!'"

After this encounter Jesus looks at the disciples and makes this statement about the rich entering the Kingdom of God. A literal translation of these words would be, "how hard it is for those who have things". Things, or possessions, is translated as riches. When things or possessions place a position of first importance in our lives it becomes a barrier against the entrance into the Kingdom of God and blessing.

Mark 10:24-25, "The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, '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 someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.'"

The disciples are absolutely amazed at what Jesus had said because the view during that time was that riches and possessions were seen as blessings from God. The disciples' view was that those who were rich had special advantages when it came to God and to entering the Kingdom of God.

Jesus then gives an illustration of the largest animal in the Middle East on land, a camel, and the image of pushing this camel into the smallest opening, the eye of the needle.

Mark 10:26, "The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, 'Who then can be saved?'"

Again, it is noted by Mark that the disciples were even more amazed that Jesus said this. If somebody who is so blessed by God cannot enter the Kingdom of God it leads to the question then who can be saved question?

Mark 10:27, "Jesus looked at them and said, 'With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.'"

Jesus replies with a very well-known verse, "with man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God." Jesus gives the great solution. He clearly states that salvation is the work of God by His grace. It is impossible for men and women to earn their salvation.

No one can be saved by their own efforts. God does it for us. The words *eternal life*, *salvation*, and *entered into the Kingdom God* are used synonymously here. Jesus clearly states that it is not just hard to be saved but it is impossible to be saved by yourself. If someone believes they can try to save themselves, there is no hope of becoming a disciple.

Mark 10:28, "Then Peter spoke up, 'We have left everything to follow you!'"

Peter sees the failure of the rich man to give up what he had to follow Jesus and compares it to what the disciples have done, giving everything up to follow Jesus. While perhaps to a lesser degree, the disciples gave up everything to follow Jesus, but are learning that it is not enough to have eternal life.

In Matthew 19:27 Peter actually says, "what then will there be for us?" The disciples were still thinking in terms of material rather than spiritual values at this time.

Mark 10:29-30, "'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 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.'"

Jesus does not rebuke Peter at all but in fact agrees with him that yes, they have left much. But God will give back much more, just as he gave more to Job in the Old Testament. Job lost many things, but God gave back more than he could ever see. Jesus says that those that have left much, will receive much in life.

Mark 10:31, “But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”

There are a number of instances where Jesus has used this same saying. In this context, it refers to those who have ranking position in the now, who will not have rank in the future life eternal. It is also a warning for the disciples, and for us today, that we should not seek rewards on earth, but should store up treasures in heaven. Discipleship entails suffering and service, based on our commitment to Jesus and our love for Jesus in the salvation of our soul.

There is a cost to follow, but eternal life is well worth it.

As we look at some key takeaways from this passage, consider the following:

1. This passage is for the searching unbeliever, and for the believer.
2. In comparison to the 7 billion people in the world, we in North America, are all considered wealthy.
3. The stumbling block for the rich man was his wealth and possessions, but that may not be our stumbling block. This passage is more about what is keeping us from fully committing to Christ than it is about wealth.

The disciples asked the question who then can be saved? If the rich man, who has so much influence, cannot himself get into the Kingdom of God, who can.?

Anyone that God is calling out to, can receive eternal life. God calls out to humanity and allows humanity to answer.

Eternal life is attained through something called God's grace. God's grace is unmerited favor upon us. God welcomes us into his presence, into a relationship with him, when we do not deserve to be in it because of our sin. Sin is that which separated us from a relationship with God. That sin entered when our ancestral parents Adam and Eve sinned before God, and we inherited something called the sinful nature.

God's grace was shown in the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, the one without sin who was made sin for us. The wrath of God poured out on Him instead of us. The reconciliation between God and humanity occurred because of God making it happen. We do not deserve God's grace because we were the ones that caused the initial separation of that relationship.

God's grace invites us into a place that we have no right to be in. But God through his love invites us into that place. It is all about God's grace, that is the only way that we can come into relationship with Christ for all eternity.

BIG IDEA

God's Grace frees us from the clutches of **this world**.



In verse 17 the rich young ruler said, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” That question in itself is the wrong thing to ask. Eternal life according to this individual is based on something that he can do. But it doesn't work that way. We have the mindset that it is based upon us, on what I can do, but it has never been that way. It's not supposed to be that way.

God's grace saves us from the clutches of this world that deludes us to think we can do things on our own.

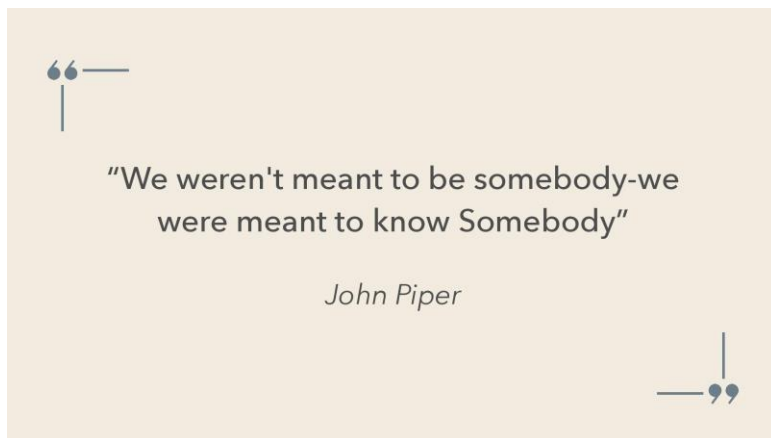
When we look at God's grace, we realize that...

God's Grace is given, not earned.

We cannot do anything by ourselves to have eternal life. There is nothing that we can do to attain it. It can only be given to us. We cannot earn it at all. We are not supposed to earn it. In fact, when the horrible, cataclysmic event that happened in the book of Genesis, in which Adam and Eve sinned before God, there was given a Band-Aid solution to have a relationship with God, the required sacrifices. But the sacrifices had to constantly happen. There was no permanent solution. Nothing that humanity could do to bring a permanent solution to our relationship with God. The permanent solution was in God. There had to be a perfect sacrifice given. And who could find that perfect sacrifice? Not us, but God.

In these past few weeks in the Mark series, we have heard Jesus predict his death. He said that the Son of Man would be delivered. And in the context of that scripture, the “delivered” had already taken place. It was a future event that was already as good as done. But the person who delivered up the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ was God himself. God provided the perfect sacrifice for all eternity. Nothing that we could have done in our own depravity could help us attain eternal life. To the Jewish mindset it was keeping the law, but the law was there to point us to the person to who could fulfill that law and that was Jesus Christ.

The rich young man thought he could attain this eternal life by what he could do because of his status, because of his age, because of his prosperity. He wanted to be a somebody and in being that somebody he thought that would give him leverage on earning his way two eternal life.



That somebody is Jesus Christ who freely gives grace to us. Remember it is about God giving us freely his love, through grace, to have a relationship with him. We were all meant to know somebody and that somebody is the Living God.

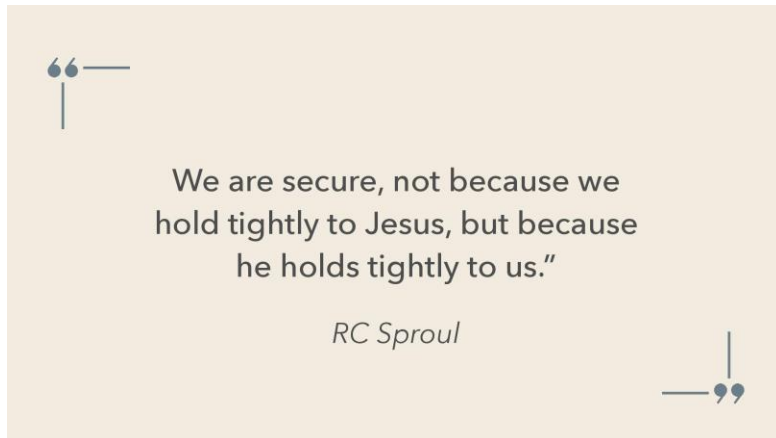
God's Grace brings freedom.

This is why Jesus asked the rich young ruler to give everything that he had to the poor and to follow Him. Everything that you have, that you are holding onto is a stumbling block. You may think that will give you eternal life, but Jesus said no, that is not the way. The way is to give it up and just come and believe in Him and follow Him.

The only thing that the rich young ruler had to do was to give up his stumbling block for eternal life, for a relationship with Jesus. Now think about this beautiful exchange. Giving up your wealth, all that you have, and you are freely given eternal life.

For those that are Christ followers, what is one thing you have that you need to give up, that is a point of stumbling for you. There is a freedom in giving it up to God and the exchange is a wonderful exchange here.

God does not want you to just stay where you are but wants to help you go further into a better life in him. He does not just leave us where we are.



We are given a freedom in our relationship to go further or where we are supposed to be, instead of staying stagnant in the place that we are. That is what grace does. He is a great encouragement as you go forward in life into what He has given you, into what He is giving you and what you already have so you can have a life that is to the calling He has given you.

God's Grace gives us blessings.

The rich young man probably thought that if he gave all that he had, which in the mindset of the Jewish people was blessings, he would have nothing left. His mindset is on the "right now" instead of the "tomorrow". His mindset is on earthly things and not the things of heaven. His mindset is finite as opposed to the infinite, unbelievable riches of God. The riches of God are not financial and what we think, but the riches of God are something totally different. Remember God sees things very differently from how we do.

When Jesus was talking to the disciples in the last couple of verses, he gave them a three-point promise. In this passage of scripture, including Matthew in Luke' telling of this encounter, Jesus gives fuller explanation, and says the words "for my sake and for the gospel". A person who forsakes their home, their loved ones, their land, for the sake of Jesus and the Gospel will:

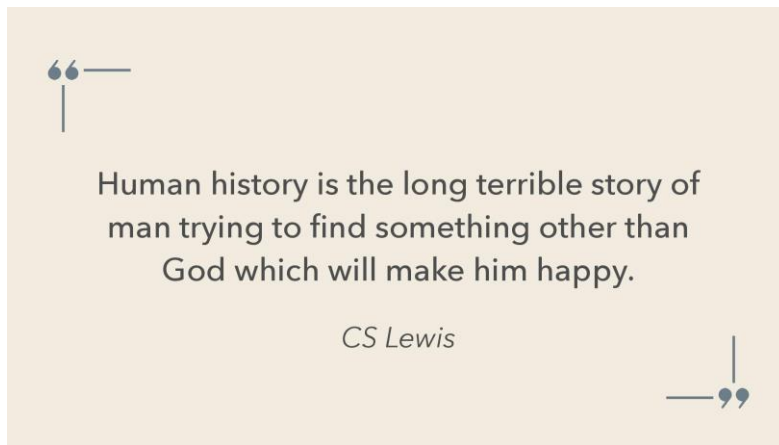
- Receive back in their life 100 fold or what they have lost.
- Suffer persecutions.
- Have eternal life in the age to come.

The 100 fold return in life is in the context of the new community in which the believer comes to. That is the church. Multiplication of relationships. Jesus also shares that the Christian life will have persecutions. The writing of Mark takes place during the persecution of the Roman church and Mark is paying attention to those who are persecuted for following Jesus. Then Jesus promises eternal life in the age to come. This is the hope that everything that happens in the present will not compare to the greater things in the future in a relationship with Christ.

For those who are not followers of Christ, the promises that come when you become a disciple of Jesus and receive the grace that He has given you will cost some sacrifice on your part, but you will receive great blessings - 100 times more than what you would think. Further, you receive a life in the present with a destiny to fulfill.

For the disciple of Christ right now, remember the greater blessings that will come in future because of the decision that you have already made.

Who then can be saved is what the disciples asked Jesus. The answer is all those who hear the calling of Christ and come into relationship with him. Through His grace we can have a relationship with him, and this relationship is secure.



To those who are searching, listen and respond to the call of God upon your life right now. He is calling you into a relationship. Are you looking for a fulfillment of life that comes from God, a reason to live that comes from God, the purpose to live that comes from God? Are you looking for joy, are you looking for great happiness like the rich young ruler was looking for? Because ultimately eternal life will be ultimate joy and ultimate happiness that comes from God.

Stop trying to find something other than God, because he is here right now calling to you to be with Him. He gives His grace, love, and mercy. He is calling out to you today; all you have to do is answer that call. For the Christ follower, the riches of the world prevented the rich young ruler from attaining eternal life, but what is it for you? What is the one thing that is a tripping hazard, a stumbling block, that prevents you from having a life to the fullest here on earth? Is there something that you need to give up to carry your cross and follow Jesus the way you should?