

The Man Who Had Everything But the Main Thing

Mark 10:17-22

Jesus loved meeting people. One of the fascinating features of the Gospels is to listen in to the interviews that Jesus had with a variety of people. He was always ready to listen to their problems, to answer their questions as he walked the roads of Galilee and Judea. Jesus longed to point men and women towards the Kingdom of God. Many of the personal encounters Jesus had while He was on this earth ended wonderfully. Often the people who met Jesus were healed, saved, and changed forever. However, not every meeting ended so gloriously! In Mark 10 today, we meet a man who had a personal encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ that ended tragically.

I would like for us to look into this encounter today, because I fear that there are many people today who are in the same condition as this man. They want to be saved and they may even feel that they are saved, but they have no understanding it really means to believe in Jesus and follow Him as a disciple.

I want us to consider our own relationship with Jesus as we consider this man's desire, his deception, and his decision. Follow along in your Bible as I read Mark 10:17-22:

17 Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"

18 So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God.

19 You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Do not defraud,' 'Honor your father and your mother.' " ; Deuteronomy 5:16-20

20 And he answered and said to Him, "Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth."

21 Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me."

22 But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

I. THE MAN AND HIS DESIRE V. 17

As we heard, Jesus' encounter with this man is recorded also by Matthew (Matt. 19:16-22) and by Luke (Luke 18:18-23). All three accounts tell us that he was a rich man. Matthew tells us he was a young man. Luke adds that he was a ruler. This probably means that he is a leader in the local synagogue. He is a man of some influence in religious circles. So this man has come to be known as The Rich Young Ruler.

From every outward appearance, this man was the ideal young person. He was everything a mother might want her son to be. He was clean cut, religious, wealthy and morally clean. He was likely the envy of everyone!

As this young man comes to Jesus, he gets several things right. Notice:

1. He comes to the right Person - He had evidently heard of Jesus and knows that if anyone can help him, Jesus can.
2. He comes in the right way - **He comes running**, because he knows the urgency of the situation. Nothing in life is as urgent as your salvation! Life could end at any moment and you need to be sure that you have eternal life! **He also came kneeling**. This shows that he recognized that there is something special about Jesus. He humbles himself before the Lord, which is how everyone must come. Jesus had just used the illustration of a child to show this. He said, **"Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it."** (Mark 10:15).
3. He comes for the right purpose - This young man came to Jesus pondering the issues of eternity. He had the most important things on his heart. Here is a man who has it all, yet with all his power, his possessions and his privileges, he still does not know that answer to the greatest of all questions. In spite of all he has going for him, this man must have felt there was something missing. In spite of all that he had, he still had an itch he could not scratch! Nothing satisfied the deepest longing of his soul. Otherwise, why would he have come to Jesus for answers? So, he comes running to Jesus. He falls down before the Lord and he cries out, **"Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"**

Maybe there are people in this room in the same shape as this young man. From every outward appearance, you have it together. You have a little money. Maybe your name is well known and you are well thought of in the community. Maybe you are a pretty good person, who has lived a clean, moral life. Maybe you are a church member, a leader, a teacher, and everyone thinks your life is complete.

But, in spite of all you have, there is still something missing in your life. You know you have what it takes to live, but you also know that you are unprepared to die. You have everything you want and need materially, but you do not have spiritual peace with God. Everything looks good on the outside, but the insides are all messed up. If that describes you, then keep listening, because Jesus has a word of hope for you!

II. THE MAN AND HIS DECEPTION V. 17-21

While this man gets several things right, he gets the main thing terribly wrong. Notice his question in verse 17. **"Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"** Matthew's account puts it this way, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?", Matt. 19:16. This man knows he has a lot of good things stacked up in his corner. He seems to think that if he can just add some other good thing, then he can have salvation as a reward. There is a basic problem with his question:

He thinks salvation can be earned - In other words, he is looking for a "Do" oriented salvation. He wants to earn it for himself. Many people still believe that salvation is based on "do". They've got to do something to get it. And so we have our list of dos: join the church, get baptized, teach Sunday School, give, become a moral person, and stop sinning, and the list could go on forever!

The Bible tells us in no uncertain terms that salvation is never about what I "Do", Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5. Salvation, through Jesus Christ, is always about what Jesus has "Done!" When Jesus died on the cross, He said "It is finished!" He did

it all and there is nothing you and I can do you to add to it or to get it on our own. Salvation is was achieved by Jesus when died on the cross and rose again. We receive it as a gift by faith! Salvation has never been about what we can do, but it has always been about what He did!

The Philippian Jailer had the same questions for Paul and Silas in Acts 16:30, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Paul's answer to him was that there was nothing more to do but to believe, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ", Acts 16:31!) Nothing has changed! If you want to be saved, you must rest in "Done!" and forget about "Do!"

When Jesus hears what this man wants, He responds in an unusual manner. He confronts this young man in two specific areas.

1. Jesus confronts him regarding the Person of the Savior - When this young man called Jesus "good teacher", Jesus reminded this young man that no one was good but God. Why did Jesus say this? I think first of all it was to make this man consider how he viewed Jesus. Was Jesus just an elevated "teacher" as the words "good Master" imply, or did this young man say that he believed Jesus to be God in the flesh? Obviously, this man only believed that Jesus was a great teacher.

That is one of this man's problems! Before he, or anyone, for that matter, can be saved, they must come to the place where they have a correct understanding of Who Jesus Christ is. He is not just a good moral man, a teacher sent to show us the way. No! He is far more than that! He is God in the flesh! He isn't just another stop on the scenic road to Heaven. He is the only hope you have of salvation. Jesus wants this man to think about who Jesus really is.

2. Jesus confronts him regarding the Problem of Sin - I think the other thing that Jesus is doing when He reminds this man that only God is good, is that Jesus is trying to get this man to see that he is a sinner. This man thinks of Jesus as a good teacher. But I think he also thinks of himself as a good person. Jesus plainly tells him that no one is good but God.

Then Jesus take the man to the law in the Old Testament. He says, "**You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Do not defraud,' 'Honor your father and your mother.'**" When Jesus rattles off the list of commandments, it isn't to imply that salvation comes by keeping them. Jesus is trying to get this man to see that he is a sinner. He wants this man to see that it is his sin that needs to be dealt with.

Apparently, this young man believed that salvation was just something else he could add to his resume. But, Jesus wants him to see that he is a sinner and as a sinner he has no ground upon which to stand before the face of God. Jesus wants him to see that regardless of what he may possess materially, he is morally and spiritually bankrupt.

When this man responds to Jesus, he says, "**Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth.**" He declares that he has kept the Law and has not broken it. It is interesting that Jesus doesn't disagree with him. It may be that he is clean outwardly, but Jesus is trying to get him to see the condition of his heart! Sin is not just what we do on the outside, it is the attitude that we have on the inside. To be right with God is not a matter of outward righteousness, it is a matter of inward righteousness.

This is where many people are isn't it? They take an external, superficial, inventory of their lives and think they are alright. They say, "I don't beat my wife. I don't abuse my children. I don't run around. I don't drink. I provide for my family. I am a pretty good person. And, after all, compared to some people, why, I am almost a saint!"

Do you know what's wrong with that? The problem with people and their relationship with God is not what they are outwardly, it's what they are inwardly! The heart of the problem is a problem with the heart! All people are sinners, Rom. 3:10-12, 18, 23. No one is good but God alone. This man could clean up the outside all he could, but he was still a sinner!

You can wash a pig, perfume him and put a ribbon around his neck and he looks clean. But, you turn him loose and he'll head straight to the mud. Why? He is a pig and that is what pigs do! You can take a corpse and comb its hair, put makeup on it, perfume it and it looks pretty good, but it will still rot and decay. Why? It is a dead corpse and that's what corpses do! A sinner may turn over a new leaf and look good outwardly. He may be a moral, clean, hard working person, but he is still a sinner at heart and he needs a Savior. That is what Jesus wanted this young man to know and that is what He wants you to know as well.

Notice how Jesus feels toward this man. Verse 21 says "**Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him.**" Jesus still loved this young man regardless of his sins and regardless of his improper understanding of the things of God. And no matter where you are today, He loves you too. As proof of His love, Jesus tells this young man how to be saved. It is this message that we all need to hear today.

Jesus tells him to do three things.

1. Sell his possessions and give the money to the poor - Jesus isn't implying that salvation is earned by giving away our material possessions. He is merely placing His finger on the root of this man's problem. He loved his money more than he wanted God in his life. Jesus is saying, "If you want Me, you can place nothing else ahead of Me!" By the way, that is still the message of the Gospel today! While many are preaching "easy believism" and telling lost sinners, "You can come to Jesus and hang onto everything you love in the world too." Jesus says, "If you aren't willing to turn your back on everything for me, then you can't come to me to be saved!", Matt. 6:24; Matt. 16:24. That sounds harsh, and it is, but it is still message of the Gospel. Nothing else will save!

2. Take up the cross - The cross was symbolic of death. To take up one's cross was to go to one's death. Jesus is saying, "If you want me, then you have to die to yourself!" In other words, your loves, your goals, your desires, your plans, everything you have, must be given up if you want to come to Jesus! Many people think you can "Come to Jesus on your terms and live as you please." Jesus says, "If you want to come to me you have to die to yourself, and if you will do that, then I will live through you!" Which describes the salvation you have today?

3. Follow Jesus - Here is the heart of the matter! This young man has been following power, prestige, position and possessions. Jesus says, "You turn your back on all that and you follow me. That is how you get eternal life!"

The demands of the Gospel are clear. You must forsake your sins through genuine repentance and embrace the Savior by faith. This, and this alone, will save your soul, Ill. Rom. 10:9! Some will say, "But preacher, if we make it sound

so hard, people won't come! We have to make it easy for people to get saved." My answer is this: "We cannot make it any easier than God has already made it, Rom. 10:13; John 6:37. But, we must also tell the truth about the matter. If you think you can have Jesus on the one hand and hold to the world with the other, then you are dead wrong. If that is what you have. Then you don't have salvation, you have nothing more than religion, and you need to be saved! Our duty to this generation is not to make the Gospel easier to swallow, but it is to tell the world the truth. I still believe that when God speaks to hearts, shows them their condition and draws them to Himself, they will come to Him by faith!

III. THE MAN AND HIS DECISION V. 22

Here is the saddest part of this entire encounter. This young man makes his decision, but it is a tragic decision. Let's notice what he did.

A. He Made An Earthly Decision - He chose his possessions over Jesus! He loved his money more than he wanted to be saved. Jesus will allow you to make the same choice. It may not be money. It may be pleasure, some sin, your family, your independence, etc. If you want it, He will let you keep it! But, ask yourself this question: "Is it really worth more than my soul?" Friend, nothing is worth your soul, Mark 8:36-37!

B. He Made An Eternal Decision - We don't know how this man's story turned out. For all we know, he walked away from Jesus and eventually into Hell forever. Is that how your story will end? It doesn't have to! If you have recognized the fact that you are not right with God. You are not saved and you know it, and you want to meet Jesus, I am inviting you to come to Him today so that He can save you and forever change your life! If you are saved, but your commitment to Jesus isn't what it should be I am inviting you to get that settled today as well. Whatever the need may be, there is help and hope in Jesus.

Friends, what you do with Jesus in this life, will determine what He will do with you in the afterlife! Has He called you to follow Him? What was your response? Did you forsake all to go after Jesus, regardless of the cost? Is He calling you now? What will you say? Will you come to Him and be saved, or will you go away from Him to continue to live without Him and maybe one day to die without Him? It is decision time, what will you do?

In verse 21, Jesus summed up this young man's dilemma with these words, "**One thing you lack.**" This man had everything, but the most important thing. He had everything but he lacked Jesus! Does that describe you? Do you have money? Position? Youth? Beauty? Health? Education? Or anything else you can name, but still lack Jesus? Friend, you don't have to go another minute without Him. Today is a time of personal encounters. Jesus is speaking to hearts right now. Don't let your encounter with Him become a tragic one day. Don't walk away from Jesus, come to Him now!