

## Mark 10:13–27

*Lord Jesus, as we sit under your word we pray that you might teach us. Remove any barriers that might hinder us from hearing you. Soften our hard hearts and unblock our ears. Be merciful to us we pray and we ask all this for the glory of your name, Amen.*

### **A Childlike Humanity**

Will it is somewhat ironic, at a time when we are being told to do social distancing — and I think feeling the strain of it — that our passage begins with Jesus embracing a little child. Literally Jesus enfolds His arms around this little, helpless, needy one.

But this little, helpless, needy one is, as we've been reminded ver recently, an accurate picture of humanity. This reality has hit home for many, especially with what is happening with the Coronavirus. Maybe it has dawned on you, with the countless, relentless changes that are happening, just how weak and helpless you are. There is social distancing. The government keeps changing its recommendations to keep us all safe to love our neighbours. There is the hand-washing and how long we ought to be doing that for. Borders closing. Local businesses affected, be they small or large.

When I went to pick up coffee beans from a local roasters and also when I went to a cafe at the foreshore, I found tears were welling up as I spoke to owners or staff. It's beginning to hit them hard and we don't really know what to do. And now we are unable to meet together, as is good for us to do. It is a difficult time.

## A Humbling Time

This is a most humbling time for us, and for our neighbours, and for our communities. And then if you start to think about the impact it has on other countries and where they are at, I find it is quite crushing.

Humanity, you are I, are little, helpless, and needy. We are a right mess. And it is when we are a right mess that we need hugs.

Let me read to you v.13–16 again, but let me swap the word ‘children’ with ‘mess.’

*<sup>13</sup> People were bringing little messes to Jesus  
in order that he might touch them;  
and the disciples spoke sternly to the parents.*

*<sup>14</sup> But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to His disciples,  
“Let the little messes come to me; do not stop them;  
for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.*

*<sup>15</sup> Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God  
as a little mess will never enter it.”*

*<sup>16</sup> And Jesus took the mess up in his arms,  
and Jesus laid his hands on the mess,  
and Jesus blessed the mess.*

So when you feel at a loss in the coming week, keep in mind Jesus has come to embrace you. To enfold you in His arms, to bless you, to comfort you. He comes to those who recognise they are weak. He loves the weak, for they are those who recognise they have absolutely nothing to offer God. They can only bring Him their mess, and yet He is pleased to comfort and to heal them.

I found this verse from Psalm 34:18 a great comfort this last week,

*“The Lord is near to the brokenhearted,  
and He saves those who are crushed in spirit.”*

I found this to be great news this past week. I hope it is also good news for you as well. We'll come back to this in just a moment.

## **The Rich Young Man**

But now I want you to see something else that is important. from v.17 onwards. Jesus has just declared He welcomes those who are little, helpless, needy children. yet now from v.17 we see Him welcome a great, moral, upright, dependable, independent, and wealthy young man. Now we know this man is young. Mark doesn't tell us this, but in the same account in Matthew's gospel, we are told he is a young man. A rich young man as most Bibles put it.

And Jesus engages in conversation with this rich young man. He doesn't send him away. He doesn't dismiss him or look down on him because he is wealthy. But the question seems to be, will this rich young man receive Jesus?

If v.13–16 show us Jesus wants to welcome the little, needy, and helpless in order to bless them. Then v.17–22 show us we have to let go of everything we believe will save us — even the good things — otherwise Jesus cannot bless us, and we will depart from Him grieving.

So consider this rich young man with me. There is so much about him which is commendable, which is good. I could see four things, maybe you can find more.

## **Four Commendable Traits in The Rich Young Man**

1. **Firstly** in v.17, this young man seeks out Jesus. And we presume his question is a genuine one, *"What must I do to inherit eternal life?"* What must I do to be saved? That's a great question.

2. **Secondly** he recognises Jesus is a good teacher. He is correct in saying Jesus is good and Jesus is a teacher. Jesus is always good and He is indeed The Teacher of Teachers.

3. **Thirdly**, we also see in v.20 this young man has lived honourably towards God and towards His neighbour.

Please notice that Jesus does not tell this rich young man that he is a liar when he says he has kept God's law since youth. Let's remember this is Jesus who perceives people's hearts and Jesus knows this man's heart and does not disagree with what the young man says about himself. It seems we can conclude from this, that though this young man is rich. he has not become rich through unjust means. He has not manipulated others. he has not stolen from them. He has kept the commandments to love his neighbour.

So this young man is exemplary. An outstanding member of the community, who likely became rich through excellent relation skills and honest business practices.

In summary, he's the kind of young man parents would love their daughters to marry.

4. **Fourthly**, the last commendable trait is seen in v.21 where we read, *'And Jesus looking at the young man, loved him.'*

When it says Jesus looked at him, the word for look is an *'intense looking.'* Jesus gazed deep inside this man to determine where he incoming from. He looks inside him and He loves him.

James Edwards, a commentator makes this comment,

*'There must have been something rare and admirable in this man, for of no one else in the gospel does Mark ever say, that Jesus "loved him."'*

So this rich young man has so much going for him: genuine inquirer, he seeks out the best teacher — good judgement in that, he's honourable, and there is something that even the Lord Jesus admires in him... and yet while this young man has everything, there is a spiritual itch he cannot satisfy.

It is why he comes to Jesus in the first place, *“What must I do to inherit eternal life?”* Something is missing, and Jesus knows this, doesn't he, when he replies in v.21,

*“You lack one thing...”*

### **Did Jesus Really Say That?...**

Now let's just press Pause for a moment.

Imagine you've seen this wealthy, attractive, upright young man come to Jesus and listened in on this conversation. You would probably be thinking, *“Hold on Jesus. This young man is wealthy, moral, decent, doesn't he have it all? Not in a corrupt sense, but in a really good sense. What do you mean he lacks one thing? Isn't it clear that God has blessed him already? Isn't that right?”*

Maybe you're wondering the same thing. Why is Jesus telling this nice young man he lacks one thing. But... what is that one thing? What is this one thing this young man needs in order to inherit eternal life?

Well look and listen to Jesus' reply in v.21,

*“One thing you lack;*

*go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor,*

*and you will have treasure in heaven;*

*then come, follow me.”*

This rich young man needs to let go of his wealth, but Jesus is not just meaning financial wealth.

Remember we saw in v.13–16 Jesus comes to bless the little, needy, helpless ones. Jesus is telling this man

*“You need to let go of everything that you are trusting in, for me to be able to embrace you. At the moment you are clinging to your riches, you are clinging to your moral upstanding in the community, you are clinging to lots of good things believing those things will save you. That God will owe you for being good. That He’s your boss who must repay you for your goodness.*

*But my child, while you have repented of all bad things, you also need to let go of your good things and follow me.*

*You need to repent of trusting in your good things to receive me.*

*Eternal life is yours but only when you let everything else go.”*

This young man views God as his boss, but not as his Saviour. Jesus is testing him; you may find it confronting as well. Jesus is saying,

*“I want you to imagine life without money, without prestige, without your good reputation... to imagine life with nothing — all gone — and all you have is me. Can you live like that?”*

Well it is tragic, v.22,

*‘When rich young man heard this,  
he was shocked and went away grieving,  
for he had many possessions.’*

Jesus is ready to give this man eternal life. This man wants eternal life. But he was not willing to give up everything else in order to gain it.

## **Perplexed By This?**

Maybe you're perplexed like the disciples were, thinking God wanted you to be good and upright because then He would accept you. Friend, do not trust in your goodness, do not trust in your good deeds to save you. If you do, Jesus is not your Saviour, but *only* a good teacher to obey. He is not your Saviour because you are still saving yourself or trying to.

Well Jesus exclaims, v.24–25,

*“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.”*

And the disciples are rightly astounded. And they ask, *“Who can be saved?”* They understand what Jesus is saying very clearly. No amount of good works, no amount of wealth, no amount of admirable qualities in any person can ever save them.

**But** listen to the good news Jesus has to those are listening, v.27,

*‘Jesus looked at them and said,  
“For mortals it is impossible, but not for God;  
for God all things are possible.”’*

In other words, you can never save yourself, you are little, needy, helpless... but God can save you! He is ready to enfold in His arms to bless you. But for Him to embrace you, you have to stop embracing everything else.

*“The Lord is near to the brokenhearted,  
and saves those who are crushed in spirit.”*

## Two Closing Thoughts

Friends, in the coming weeks we can expect two things to happen and I want you to be ready for them.

1. **Firstly there will be a lot of weeping.** Others will weep, You will weep. I will weep. Because we'll be constantly reminded of how little, needy, helpless we actually are. Everyday things are changing. Much, much more than we're used to. It is relentless and it is exhausting. It is fine to weep. It is right to weep. And when we hear of the many deaths, it would be wrong not to weep.

So weep with those who weep. Stand with business owners and weep with them, with leaders, with the government, with those who are felling the distancing is just too much. Give people permission to weep, to recognise, admit, and own they are little, needy, and helpless.

2. **The second thing to expect is that we will see more people believe they will be fine.** People who will strongly insist, sometimes with anger, sometimes very politely, that they are not little, that they are not needy, that they are not helpless.

We'll meet people who are like this rich young man who are convinced they can somehow save themselves with their determination, with their wealth, maybe with their science, whatever it might be. We must watch out for this in ourselves and listen to Jesus and repent of it.

So if you or anyone else with you weeps, remember Jesus comes to us to embrace the mess, to embrace us who are little, needy, helpless, and this is in order to bless us.

And if you are with anyone who believes they can save themselves, remember that such a thing is impossible for us. But it is not impossible for God to save them.

Let us encourage people to let go of everything in order that they might receive everything of God.

## **But How?!**

Now it is frightening to think about. *“How can I possibly let go of everything and trust God?”* We can do so because Christ gave up everything, even His life in order to come to us, to die for us, and to rise again for us.

Ponder this from 2 Corinthians 8:9,

*‘For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich.’*

Let us pray.

*Heavenly Father we need your guidance at this time.*

*We need to be constantly reminded that you receive the mess. You receive us. Help us in turn to receive you, to let go of everything we hold dear. Help us stop embracing things that are of this earth, things that will one day perish. Let us be enfolded by you. Guide us we pray, for the glory of your name we ask. Amen*