

Meet Jesus: and discover true wealth

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[0 : 00] So, we're in Mark's Gospel. We're just continuing along in Mark's Gospel. We're in chapter 10 of Mark's Gospel and I'll read from verse 13. It's on page 846.

Mark chapter 10 from verse 13. And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them. And the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, Let the children come to me.

Do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.

And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them. 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 Jesus said to him, Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments. Do not murder. Do not commit adultery.

[1 : 13] Do not steal. Do not bear false witness. Do not defraud. Honor your father and mother. And he said to him, Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth.

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. And Jesus, looking around, looked around and said to his disciples, How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God.

And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, Children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God. 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.

And they were exceedingly astonished. And he said to him, Then who can be saved? Jesus looked at them and said, With man it is impossible, but not with God.

[2 : 30] For all things are possible with God. Peter began to say to him, See, we have left everything and followed you. Jesus said, Truly I say to you, There is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the gospel who will not receive a hundredfold now, in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands with persecutions and in the age to come eternal life.

But many who are first will be last. And the last first. So, our passage today is about how our attitude to Jesus will determine whether or not we are in the kingdom of God.

That's the question. Who is in and who is out? What about the children? We have got three scenes. We will have a look at the children first. Just have a look with me at verse 14.

Look there at verse 14. But when Jesus saw it, He was indignant and said to them, Let the children come to me. Do not hinder them. For to such belongs the kingdom of God.

To such belongs the kingdom of God. So, that's the children. What about the rich man? Is he in or is he out? Well, he wants to know himself, doesn't he?

[3 : 56] Look at the question there in verse 17 that he asks. 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?

So, Jesus explains to this rich man how he can inherit eternal life, but he's just not interested. So, has he got eternal life?

Well, sadly, the answer is no. And then there's the disciples. They've sort of been listening and watching. And that's exactly the question that's going through their minds.

Who's in and who's out? Verse 26. And they were exceedingly astonished and said to him, Then who can be saved? It's exactly the same question, isn't it?

It's a great passage, isn't it? This lunchtime we can leave knowing where we'll be in eternity.

[4 : 56] Firstly then, let's look at those children. The Wains. Let's look at them. Let's begin, friends, by thinking about the context of this passage.

If you just look over the page at the top of chapter 11, can you see the triumphal entry there? Do you see the heading? Of course, you know, Jesus is going to Jerusalem.

And what's in Jerusalem? The temple's there, isn't it? So, the Jewish people are expecting Jesus to reign from the temple as he brings in his kingdom.

You know, that's what they've been waiting for. You can almost hear them shouting, can't you, from chapter 11. Hosanna, Hosanna, they're shouting as he goes into Jerusalem. Jerusalem has been nothing comparable since.

The year 2000 was a big event, wasn't it? What did they do? They built the Millennium Dome, didn't they, down south? And we let off tons and tons of fireworks, didn't we?

[5 : 53] All around the globe for the year 2000. But this, the Messiah approaching Jerusalem, well, it's of a different order. The Jews are expecting a messianic confrontation with the world's superpower.

Who was who? Was it America? No. Rome. That's what they're expecting. Some sort of overwhelming display of God's power. That's a massive plague or something like that.

Maybe a big army of angelic presence comes down to oust the Romans, to kick Israel's enemies into oblivion.

You know, they're anticipating something like that, something of biblical proportions. The trouble is, well, the Pharisees, well, they're not quite happy with Jesus.

The Pharisees, the priests and the scribes, well, he doesn't fit their bill, does he? You know, he doesn't fit into the sort of hierarchy that they were expecting.

[6 : 59] And from chapter 3, verse 6, they want him dead, the Pharisees. So, Jerusalem beckons, and some wanting him enthroned, and others want him dead.

And here he is, friends, Jesus, with those wings in his arms. What a beautiful scene it is, isn't it?

And the disciples are thinking, well, that's not what the Messiah's supposed to do.

You know, it's like in their thinking. It's like the disciples, in their thinking, they've booked, they've hired a nice black limousine to whisk him off to Jerusalem. And it's sort of there in the background, waiting.

And the chauffeur's stepped out. He's holding the door open. He's wearing his cap, waiting for Jesus. Yet here he is, the Messiah, with his arms around these wings.

It doesn't sort of fit human understanding, does it? And it's all too much for the disciples. Verse 13, come on, Jesus, don't mess around at a time like this.

[8 : 06] And here he is, the king of the cosmos. And it's like the world has stopped. And then he utters words, doesn't he?

He utters words that describe this little oasis, words that bring dignity to those who would otherwise seem the most insignificant people in his kingdom.

Just look down, friends, at verse 14. But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, let the children come to me. Do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God.

Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it. And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them.

Jesus said, didn't he, to such belongs the kingdom of God. Let's think about children. They're dependent, aren't they, children?

[9 : 08] If you're a parent, you'll know that. And as we grow older, as we grow up, think about what happens. Just run it through your thinking. We slowly become independent, don't we?

Am I right? Is that what happens? I think that's what happens. And the problem with that is that we like it. We like being independent. You know, an independence, it sort of spills over into all sorts of different areas of our lives, doesn't it?

We think that we can manage without the creator and owner of the universe interfering in our lives, don't we? But friends, think about this.

When we look at our lives, sin doesn't work, does it? Look at society. Look at the world. Sin, independence from God. It doesn't work, does it?

But we like the feeling of independence. And here's Jesus with his arms around his wains. You know, they've not got hardened hearts, have they?

[10:11] They're dependent on others. And he holds them in his arms. And he says, to such belongs the kingdom of God. Is that you, friend?

Have you got to the point in your life where you realise that independence from God doesn't work? You and me, well, we're just sort of, we're just sort of thinking that one through.

And a grown-up comes running onto the scene. Doesn't he? And that's our second scene. Now, this man has got a problem.

He's been trying hard to be good. But he knows deep down that he's not. Perhaps he's been quietly mulling it over for ages in his thinking.

And none of his friends know. On the outside, I guess he looked sorted. Didn't he? But on the inside, on the inside, it's turmoil.

[11:16] And he's decided to come clean. To admit it. Perhaps it was just, as Jesus was beginning to leave, it was just like one of those moments, you know, sort of like when the mum's leaving the school gates and the little boy sees that she's going and he runs up and he blurts something out to his mum before she disappears.

Perhaps it's a little bit like that. He blurts it out, doesn't he? What must I do to inherit eternal life? And it's like you could hear a pin drop. It's the question, isn't it, friends, that the world wants answered.

Am I right? Here's yesterday's herald. There's an interesting article in this. It's about a Mr. McLennan and he's interested in cryogenic suspension after he dies.

Listen to the story. The 36-year-old who still lives and works in Sky has signed up with US-based Alcor Life Extension Foundation in order to be cryonically preserved upon his death.

Or his brain will be, at least. It says here, whole body preservation currently costs the equivalent of £75,000.

[12:39] So DJ, who is a partner with architects, Dulkas, has gone for the brain-only option at £40,000. He's got a bargain, hasn't he, he thinks?

The world, it doesn't know what to do with death, does it? Am I right? You know, the world outside of Christ. What happens when a person dies? Well, there's a nice funeral, isn't there?

Maybe there's a buffet afterwards and there's a lot of small talk, isn't there, going on. But people, people don't ask the big question, do they? Because there isn't an answer to it outside of Christ, do you see?

But this man, he comes clean, doesn't he? He asks a question. It's great, isn't it? When someone asks a question, it's perhaps been on the tip of your tongue for ages, but you dare not ask it.

Well, this man asks, he says, what must I do? Back home, friends, he's got the Ten Commandments. And when he reads the Ten Commandments, he knows that they're painting a portrait of somebody, but it's not him.

[13:44] What must I do? He asks. And we look at Jesus' lips, expecting some sort of command. You know, we've all taken from God, haven't we?

We feel a bit guilty about it. We want to give back. That's the way the world operates, isn't it? We want to do something. But it's all too late, friends, for that, because of Genesis chapter 2.

God had said to Adam, you shall surely die if you take of the fruit. And friends, God can't withdraw. Think about it. He can't withdraw those words. He's a faithful God. Do you understand? It's why the made-up religions of this world can never bring a person into eternal life.

They cannot deal with God's justice. God has to be faithful to his covenant. With Adam. And God looks at him, doesn't he? This rich man.

[14:47] He's been trying to sort of butter him up a bit, hasn't he? Good teacher, he'd said. Look what Jesus says to him there in verse 18. And Jesus said to him, why do you call me good?

No one is good except God alone. Jesus is saying, well, if you're trying to impress me, you've not actually worked out who you're speaking to.

And then secondly, he's saying, you know, if this is a purely human compliment, don't think that humans can muster up goodness.

And here's the problem. This is the essence of it, friends, isn't it? This man is superficially good. Are you with me? On the outside, he looks nearly perfect, doesn't he?

We think, you know, we think, perhaps we think Jesus ought to recruit him to be a disciple. He'd make a good disciple. But like he does with us, friends, Jesus begins to look, doesn't he, beneath the surface.

[15:52] You know, Jesus hadn't mentioned the first commandment, you shall have no other gods before me. And deep down, out of sight, this man is relying on another god.

You know, he'd not thought about his wealth as a god. He thought he could sort of have a foot in both camps. Just listen to Jesus, friends.

Just listen to Jesus. This is, think about this, this is the interface between the Old Testament and the New Testament. It's like the handover point. Paul had said in Galatians chapter 3, the law was our guardian until Christ came in order that we might be justified by faith.

And so it's sort of handover time. Let's look what happens here. Do you see verse 21? Just look there, see what happens. Verse 21, And Jesus, looking at him, loved him.

Jesus loved him. And suddenly, it's about a relationship, isn't it? It's not about what we can do for God. It's not about performance.

[17:01] But Jesus is aware, isn't he, friends, that this man has another love. Yes, he's on his knees before Jesus, but it's not Jesus he worships.

Verse 21, look, 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. Do you see what Jesus is doing? Jesus is tugging at that rug beneath his feet. Are you with me? It's a bit like the Garden of Eden. It's a question of loyalty.

Adam, reach for the fruit and all this man has to do is let go of it. But he won't, will he? He won't. The devil's so good, isn't he, at distorting our thinking.

You know, a bit of fruit or eternal life, Adam, which do you want? I think I'll go for the fruit. So daft, isn't it?

[18:11] So stupid. We are so stupid when we ignore God. And this man says, Oh, I'll take my wealth.

Thanks, Jesus. And friends, what's your weakness? What is it that the devil would like you to follow other than Jesus? You know, we can think to ourselves, can't we?

We can think, well, I know it's displeasing to you, Jesus, but, and listen, when we're doing that, friends, we're trying to override God's authority in our lives.

And think about it, whatever it is, it's pathetically small. Am I right? In comparison to an eternity with Jesus. Yet the devil distorts our logic, doesn't he? Might be with relationships.

You know, we can think of ingenious ways of justifying ourselves, can't we? You know, we can say to ourselves, well, Jesus is so unreasonable, it is 2008, and we can slowly harden our hearts.

[19:15] And that's what this man has done here. Very interesting, wasn't it, when Jesus said to him, you lack one thing, go. A little bit like what he said to Abraham, Genesis 12.

Now the Lord said to Abraham, go, go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you, and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.

I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. So Abraham went as the Lord had told him.

But this man, well it's a different story, isn't it? Verse 22, disheartened by the saying he went away sorrowful for he had great possessions. He came to Jesus because he thought he wasn't good enough and sadly he shuffles away, doesn't he, to try again from his own resources.

Paul wrote in Galatians chapter 3, cursed is everyone who does not observe all things written in the book of the law, Mark says he was disheartened, sorrowful.

[20:30] I guess he wouldn't be a very nice person would he, to be with. Yes, he's got wealth, but looming up on the horizon is his death and judgment and hell.

So his life's just sort of out of display, isn't it? There's no inner hope inside, no substance, and sadly friends, the world is full of such folk, isn't it?

He was so close to eternity with God. The disciples were, they're gobsmacked and that's very briefly our final scene, the disciples.

Just look with me there at verse 24. Do you see? And the disciples were amazed at his words, but Jesus said to them again, there's that word. What's he calling them?

Can you see? Children. That's right. Children. Isn't that nice? How difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God. It's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.

[21 : 35] And they were exceedingly astonished. Well, I think I would be. I wonder what that looked like. I wonder what exceedingly astonished looks like. It must have been a shocking thing that Jesus said to them.

He said to them, they were exceedingly astonished, and he said to them, then who can be saved? Well, they said to him, didn't they, who can be saved? It's that same question, isn't it? It's exactly the same question that the man asked. Jesus looked at them and said, what does he say? Can you see that? It must have been nice to look into the eyes of Jesus, those dark brown Jewish eyes.

They look at his eyes and he looks at them and he says, look, friends, with man. You could put your name there, couldn't you? What's your name? Put it in that sentence. With Alex, it is impossible, but not with God.

For all things are possible with God. It's amazing, isn't it, that? You know, if you came here this lunchtime and you were unsure of your salvation, you need to remember that verse.

[22 : 38] You need to look at it tonight and pray it through. It's all about Jesus, isn't it? Not about us. It's not about what we do, but who we follow. It's about a relationship with Jesus.

And so his children can sing, I want you more than gold and silver. Only you can satisfy. You alone are the real joy giver and the apple of my eye.

Shall we pray? Amen. Dear Heavenly Father, we hear those words, with man it is impossible, but with God, but not with God, for all things are possible with God.

And so we give you thanks, Father, for sending your Son. In particular, this lunchtime, we're reminded that he demands our whole life. And so we pray you'd forgive us, Father, for the times when we've lived for ourselves, for our own priorities, and not yours.

We pray you'd help us to abide by your Son's teaching and trust in his death on the cross for us, all those times that we've been rebelled in our lives.

[23 : 50] So go with us now, we pray, Father, to that end. And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us now, this day, and forevermore.

Amen.