

**TREASURE IN HEAVEN**  
**Sermon for the 20<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost, 2021**  
**Mark 10:17-22**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is our Gospel read before, Mark 10:17-22: <sup>17</sup> **As Jesus was going out onto the road, a man came running to Him and fell on his knees before Him. He asked Him, “Good Teacher, what am I to do to inherit eternal life?”**

<sup>18</sup> **Jesus asked him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good except One, that is, God. <sup>19</sup> You know the Commandments: ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not give false testimony,’ ‘Do not defraud,’ ‘Honour your father and mother!’”**

<sup>20</sup> **He told Him, “Teacher, I have kept all these since I was a child.”**

<sup>21</sup> **Jesus looked straight at him and loved him. He told him, “You lack one thing, Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor! You will have treasure in heaven. Then come here and follow Me!”**

<sup>22</sup> **He looked gloomy when he heard that and went away sad, because he had great wealth.**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

As we continue our journey through the Gospel of Mark, today we come to the story of the rich young ruler. This is a story about Jesus and how He calls each of us to give up on our idols and to follow Him in faith. This is a story about the love of Jesus for sinners. It is a story for us, so that we shall inherit eternal life, that we shall **have treasure in heaven**.

The story of the rich young ruler is recorded in three gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Matthew tells us that he was young<sup>1</sup>, while Luke tells us that he was a ruler<sup>2</sup>, perhaps meaning that he was a leader in his local synagogue. All three, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, tell us that he was rich.

This **“man came running to (Jesus) and fell on his knees before Him. He asked Him, “Good Teacher, what am I to do to inherit eternal life?”** This man must have heard about this rabbi who showed so much wisdom in His teaching. And he evidently has a strong interest in getting an answer to a question that had been bothering him, **“what am I to do to inherit eternal life?”** He thought eternal life was to be gained by deeds a person would perform, but he was uncertain as to just what those deeds were. So he went to Jesus because he thought Jesus had the answer.

Calling Jesus a **“Good Teacher”** showed that this man only saw in Jesus another human teacher whom one might go and hear, a teacher who may or may not have some wisdom to dispense.

Answering him, Jesus said, **“Why do you call Me good? No one is good except One, that is, God.”** If this man wanted to find out the key to inheriting eternal life, then he was going to need more than just one man’s opinion. Jesus was not saying that He was not God but, instead, sought to have the young man reflect on why He was calling Jesus “good” and what implications that may have. Only God can unlock the door to eternal life. This man would need an answer from God, not just some advice from an outstanding rabbi or philosopher or best-selling author.

We must give some credit to this man; after all, he did have a concern for inheriting eternal life, which is important. At least he realised that a time would come when we all have to meet our Maker. There will come a day of accounting, the final Judgment Day. Then it will be either eternal life or eternal damnation for every one of us.

Jesus had to deal with this wrong idea of eternal life by way of good works. This man had to be corrected of that notion. He had to learn that eternal life is not given as a result of man’s good works. Sadly, that is a common thought people have. We come to it rather naturally that the way to get on God’s good side is by how much good we can do.

<sup>1</sup> Matthew 19:20-22

<sup>2</sup> Luke 18:18

We have to show ourselves to be better than those who are bad, and we do that by piling up our good works, accumulating enough points to outweigh our slip-ups and outscoring the people we outshine.

If the young man was going to ask a Law question, then Jesus was going to give him a Law answer. **“You know the Commandments,”** Jesus told the young man. And then He quoted them: **“Do not murder,’ ‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not give false testimony,’ ‘Do not defraud,’ ‘Honour your father and mother!’”** In other words: “There’s no secret special good deed you need to find out about if you want to gain eternal life by way of your works. You already know what to do. God has already told you in the Commandments. So then, young man, how do you measure up?”

**“Teacher, I have kept all these since I was a child.”** Now we’re getting to the problem. The young man thinks he has already done these things well enough. And, compared to most people, perhaps he has. I’m sure he was a fine young man, a model of virtue. To be a synagogue ruler already, at such a young age – no doubt he was a fine upstanding young man.

But something was missing, something nagging at his conscience like he hadn’t done enough. Otherwise, he wouldn’t be asking Jesus this question. “I’ve led a pretty decent life. I’ve tried hard. But is it enough? How can I be sure? How can I know when I’ve done enough to inherit eternal life?”

Eternal life. How many today take the time to think about it. How many people even care? Judging by the actions of so many, it would appear many do not. Probably most people in our culture don’t even give this a thought anymore. Or if it does pop up, they try to suppress it. They don’t want to think too much about death and what comes after it. They don’t want to think about a God to whom we are all accountable. It’s too scary. No, let’s numb ourselves into thinking happy thoughts. *“I’m good. You’re good. Everybody’s good - except the really bad people, of course. And you and I, we’re better than that. How dare God judge anybody, especially me! Why, that would be so judgmental!”*

Well, wishful thinking isn’t going to change reality. And the reality is that there is this matter of eternal life looming ahead and knowing now how to obtain it. And thinking you have done enough good works isn’t going to do it. The Commandments will only accuse you.

And so if the young man thinks he has done enough by way of the commandments about not murdering, not committing adultery, not stealing, and so forth - an outwardly respectable life - now Jesus is going to put His finger on an even bigger problem that the young man has, namely, his idolatry. The young man has a wrong god that he’s worshipping.

Our text says: **“Jesus looked straight at him and loved him. He told him, “You lack one thing, Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor! You will have treasure in heaven. Then come here and follow Me!”** Notice that Jesus looked at the young man and **“loved him.”** What Jesus is about to say is not because He wants the young man to be lost and damned. No. Far from it. Jesus loves this young man, even as He loves people no matter how old or young, rich or poor, they may be. Jesus looks at you and me today and loves us, and when He reveals our idols to us and calls us to repentance, He’s doing that because He loves us. He wants us to be saved and to inherit eternal life. He wants us to **have treasure in heaven.**

**“You lack one thing,”** Jesus tells the young man; **“Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor!”** Well, there is the missing ingredient! Voluntary poverty. Sell off your possessions. If you do that good work, then you have got it made. Leading an outward moral life is fine, but now, if you take this extra step of being so very charitable and selling off all your stuff and giving all the proceeds to the poor, then you will have your ticket to heaven! Do this one good work, and you’re in! Right?

Wrong! That would be a total misreading of what Jesus is saying here - although some have tried to spin in that way. But no, Jesus is not here prescribing an additional really good work for one to do to earn his way into heaven. In fact, it’s just the opposite. Jesus here is putting His finger on the young man’s idol. And in this man’s case, it was his wealth. He couldn’t give that up. His money, his possessions - that was his god. That is on what he had placed the highest value. That, then, was the idolatry that the man needed to repent.

Jesus showed that the young man was indeed a sinner. If he thought he could skate by on his outward good works, Jesus here showed him that he was still clinging inwardly to an idol, which is to break the very First Commandment, *“You shall have no other gods.”* Like that rich young man, we all need to hear that we are sinners and that we’re not going to make it based on our works. That will not gain for us eternal life and treasure in heaven.

So what will, or are we lost forever? No, we are not lost. There is a way, in fact, the only way, and that is why Jesus added those words - and this is the key to the whole story - it is when Jesus says to the young man, and to each one of us, **“come here and follow Me!”**

Come, follow Jesus! That is the way of everlasting life! There is no other. Listen to the voice of Jesus, and come, follow Him in faith. Here is where we find eternal life. In Christ. Here is how we **have treasure in heaven**: through Christ.

For Jesus is truly the “rich young ruler” who left everything behind for you and me. He, the very Son of God, has come down from heaven for us men and for our salvation. The Apostle Paul once wrote, *“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, although He was rich, yet because of you He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich”* (2 Corinthians 8:9). And so it is. Christ set aside the riches of heaven and came in our flesh as a servant. He walked the way of the cross to bear our sins and the weight of our idolatry - for we all have false gods of our own making - to suffer the judgment for our sins on the cross. He has done this for our sakes, that we might become rich, so that we would gain a treasure in heaven.

What is this treasure that we shall inherit? It is the gift of eternal life. Death is not the end for any of us. Instead, life, everlasting life, opens up before us. It is life with Christ. It is life that overcomes the grave, even as Jesus Himself has risen from the dead and lives and reigns to all eternity. It is eternal life in Christ’s everlasting kingdom, a kingdom of righteousness, peace, joy, and blessing, rejoicing with all the saints, of all ages, in the presence of God. It is a place where *“there will be no more death. There will not be any more grief, crying or pain, because the former things have passed away”* (Revelation 21:4). There is no more sin, but only singing and praising and unending joy. This is the treasure that Christ has won for us, and that is waiting for us in heaven.

Dear friends, this is the treasure we have to inherit. It is a treasure only by God’s grace. God has given us the gift of faith, of trusting in Jesus as our Saviour, as our only hope. Being baptised into Christ’s death and resurrection, all the riches of heaven belong to us.

Mark writes that the rich young man **“looked gloomy when he heard”** (what Jesus said) **“and went away sad, because he had great wealth.”** He was not ready to give up on his idol. But not so with us today. We know that the false god of possessions, or any other idol we may value - those false gods cannot save. Rather, today we hear the voice of the one true God, who can and does and has saved us. Today Jesus still calls us once again to repentance and to faith. This is a voice we can trust. **“Come here and follow Me,”** Jesus says. **“Come, follow Me, and You will have treasure in heaven.”** Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

#### PRAYER FOR THE TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Lord God, heavenly Father, You are our shelter and strength. You are always ready to help us, and never leave us. We praise You for the great mercy You have shown to us sinners in the gift of Your Son Jesus Christ. We glorify Him because He has come to remove our sins by His sacrifice on the cross, so that whoever believes in Him may not die but have eternal life. We praise You, O Father, for Your great love to us, for rescuing us from the power of sin and death, and for opening to us the gate of heaven.

We confess that we are worthless sinners, guilty of flouting Your will more than we realise. We humbly repent of our evil, and trust for our forgiveness only in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Pardon us, and cleanse our lives for His sake. Grant that we may continue in Your kingdom as Your dear children.

Renew us by Your Spirit and teach us to love what is pure, holy, true, and good. Take captive our every thought, word, and deed, and make them obey Christ. Give us the desire to walk in Your ways, to follow Your Word, and to grow in it. Touch us with Your grace, that we may be transformed in character, firm in faith, joyful in hope, patient in troubles, and persistent in prayer. Fill our lives with the hope that Christ will transform our humble bodies and make them like His glorious body.

Fill Your Church with Your Spirit, that it may have a power and wisdom superior to all human knowledge. Give to all preachers and teachers the conviction and courage of true prophets, that Your people may be built up in faith and love, strengthened in service, and kept faithful to the end.

Spread Your truth and love among the nations, that they may receive Your truth in repentance and faith. Rescue them from error and godlessness, and move them to offer You true worship and praise. Bless our country. Help all to understand that personal advantage, public opinion, and party politics do not make a nation great, but obedience to Your will. Give us public servants and leaders in management and labour who are unselfish and far-sighted, and whose concern is for the public good and the God-given dignity of every person.

Be gracious to our homes. Give to all families the gifts of faith, love, and obedience to You, so that each home may be a first taste of the joy and blessedness of our heavenly home.

We pray you to heal and comfort all who face sickness, pain, hardship, suffering, or danger. Teach them to turn to You for help, and to trust in Your mercy. Give them hope and a joyous release from all their burdens.

These things we pray in the name of Jesus, our sure refuge and eternal hope. Amen.

### 20<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

Amos 5:6-7, 10-15

<sup>6</sup> Be intent on the LORD and live, that He may not break in like a fire among the family of Joseph and that it may not burn it down! Bethel will have no one to put it out. <sup>7</sup> They are the ones who turn justice into wormwood. They have thrown righteousness down to the ground...

<sup>10</sup> They hate a person who reproves another at the city-gate. They abhor a person who speaks sincerely.

<sup>11</sup> Therefore, because you have been trampling on a lowly person and, because you take a portion of his grain away from him, although you have built houses of hewn stone, you will nevertheless not live in them. Although you have planted pleasant vineyards, you will nevertheless not drink their wine.

<sup>12</sup> For I know that your wrongdoings are numerous and that your sins are great. You attack righteous people, you take bribes and have been depriving poor people of justice at the city-gate. <sup>13</sup> That is why a person who has insight will keep silent at this time. For this is an evil time.

<sup>14</sup> Search for what is good and not what is evil, that you may live! Then the LORD, the God of hosts, will be with you, as you have been claiming. <sup>15</sup> Hate what is evil, love what is good and make justice effective in the city-gate! It may be that the LORD, the God of hosts, will be gracious to the remainder of Joseph.

Hebrews 3:12-19

<sup>12</sup> Be careful, fellow-Christians, that none of you has in him a wicked, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God! <sup>13</sup> Rather, encourage one another daily, while it is called "Today," that none of you may be

hardened by the deceitfulness of sin! <sup>14</sup> For we have become people who share in Christ, if we firmly hold the reality that we had at the beginning until the end.

<sup>15</sup> When it is said: "Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts, as you did in the rebellion!"

<sup>16</sup> Who, indeed, were those that heard Him and rebelled? Were they not, in fact, all those who were brought out of Egypt through Moses? <sup>17</sup> With whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned and whose bodies fell in the wilderness?

<sup>18</sup> To whom did He declare on oath that they would not enter His place of rest, if it was not to those who disobeyed? <sup>19</sup> So, we see that they could not enter because of unbelief.

Mark 10:17-22

<sup>17</sup> As Jesus was going out onto the road, a man came running to Him and fell on his knees before Him. He asked Him, "Good Teacher, what am I to do to inherit eternal life?"

<sup>18</sup> Jesus asked him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except One, that is, God. <sup>19</sup> You know the Commandments: 'Do not murder,' 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not give false testimony,' 'Do not defraud,' 'Honour your father and mother!'"

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