



Sermon Series: Mark: Living Everyday With Jesus  
Sermon Title: The Cost of Control  
Date: 3/1/2026

**Big Idea: Eternal life requires surrender, not addition.**

### **He Had the Right Question but the Wrong Assumption**

A rich young ruler ran to Jesus and knelt before him - remarkable given his status - and asked, “**Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?**” (Mark 10:17). He was sincere, moral, disciplined, respected, and young. He had power, success, and a life that looked spiritually intact. In that culture, wealth was often seen as evidence of God’s favor.

To the crowd watching, this man looked saved. But his question reveals the real problem: “What must I do?” He assumed eternal life could be achieved, like a checklist to complete.

Jesus responds by asking why he called him “Good,” pressing the man to consider who he’s actually talking to - if only God is truly good, then this title carries real weight. Jesus then lists commandments focused on how we treat others, notably omitting the commands about loving God above all. The man confidently claims he’s kept them all since youth (Mark 10:19-20).

But Jesus is about to expose a blind spot. He had kept the relational commands while his heart was anchored to something other than God. The danger isn’t open rebellion - it’s looking saved while being lost. Religion asks, “What can I do?” Relationship asks, “Who will I trust?”

### **Love Doesn’t Lower the Bar**

Mark notes something critical before Jesus speaks: He looked at the man and loved him (Mark 10:21). This is not harshness. This is love telling the truth. Jesus says, “**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.**”

One thing - but it was everything. Jesus wasn’t condemning wealth itself. He was exposing what this man truly worshipped. His wealth gave him security, control, and insulation from any felt need for God. Those who were sick, desperate, and broken knew they needed help.

However, this man didn't feel helpless - his wealth convinced him he was already fine. As Jesus said elsewhere, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." His possessions had taken the place of God. The obstacle wasn't a lack of visible righteousness - it was misplaced trust. The command was specific because the obstacle was specific. Jesus didn't negotiate or lower the cost. He let the man decide. Whatever we refuse to surrender is what stands between us and God.

### **Control Will Cost You Everything**

The man's face fell. He went away sad - not angry, not confused. He understood exactly what Jesus was asking, and he chose wealth over Jesus (**Mark 10:22**). The disciples were stunned. If this man can't make it, who can? Jesus answers with an impossible image: a camel going through the eye of a needle (**Mark 10:25**). Not difficult - impossible.

**"With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God"** (**Mark 10:27**). That's the gospel. Salvation is not self-deliverance - it's divine intervention. God does what we cannot do for ourselves. Paul confirms it in **Ephesians 2:8-9**: we are saved by grace through faith, not by works, so that no one can boast.

Compare Zacchaeus in **Luke 19:8** - also rich and powerful, but a completely different response. He didn't ask what to add. He let go. Same wealth. Different surrender.

What are you holding that you won't let Jesus touch? A relationship? Your finances? Your reputation? Your sense of control? Whatever it is, it will one day be left behind. But when you surrender to Christ, you don't lose - you gain forgiveness, freedom, and life with God forever. Eternal life requires surrender, not addition.

### **Discussion Questions:**

- 1. The rich young ruler came to Jesus asking the right question but with the wrong assumption. How might we today fall into the same trap of thinking eternal life or God's approval is something we earn by what we do?**
- 2. Jesus listed commandments about how we treat people but left out the ones about loving God first. What does it look like to keep all the right behaviors while still not putting God first in your heart?**
- 3. Mark tells us Jesus looked at this man and loved him before delivering hard truth. How does knowing that Jesus speaks truth from a place of love change how you receive challenges to your faith or lifestyle?**
- 4. Jesus put his finger on the one specific thing this man would not surrender. What is the area of your life that you find most difficult to release control of to God?**
- 5. Zacchaeus and the rich young ruler were both wealthy, but had opposite responses to Jesus. What made the difference? What does that tell us about what surrender actually looks like in practice?**