

Pastor Dustin Daniels | River Bible Church

**Mark 10:17-22 | The Irony of Heaven**

April 25, 2021

**WELCOME:**

- Please turn your Bibles to Mark 10:17-22
- Bibles in back—our gift to you.

**REVIEW:**

Last Sunday, we studied a short piece of Scripture.

But even though it was <sup>(4 verses)</sup> concise, it was powerful.

Scripture confirmed a divine truth that many of us already knew inherently.

*we know*

That God loves children and if a child dies before the <sup>11</sup>age of accountability, <sup>2</sup>they go to be with the Lord in Heaven.

God holds every child precious in His sight by extending to them a special salvific type of grace until they're are old enough to know good from evil.

I pray that last week's Scripture passage has brought great comfort to those of you who have lost a child.

I also pray that it brings confidence in knowing that you can boldly share this truth with others as well.

*Because it's one thing to know or believe something, but it's another to have Scripture confirm it.*

Secondly, The Holy Spirit taught us that we as adults must come to Jesus as a child in simple faith.

Scripture repeatedly teaches that the way to Heaven is to repent from your sins and believe that Jesus suffered, died, and was resurrected from the dead.

Jesus experienced the wrath of God so you wouldn't have to.

Sin is that serious - It must be paid for  
 Contrary to popular belief, there is no "stairway to Heaven" based on the illusion of your good works.

The stairway to Heaven may make for a good rock song, but it's lousy theology.

And that's set's up nicely for today's sermon.

### **INTRODUCTION:**

Today's Scripture passage is one many of you know; it's the story of the Rich Young Ruler.

This story is told in all three of the synoptic gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

Synoptic meaning similar.

The synoptic gospels give us a synopsis of what happened, and each gospel writer writes their version of the story that fits his audience and theme—all under the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit.

Matthew says that this man was "young," and Luke states that he was "a ruler." Mark indicates that he was wealthy. (cf. Mt 19:22, Lk 18:18, Mk 10:22).

So this is where we get "The Rich Young Ruler."

It is not a coincidence that in each gospel, the story of the rich young ruler follows the narrative of the children from last week.

And the reason why is significant.

Why is that so important? Let's find out.

*\*Please stand for the reading and honoring of God's Word.\**



**SCRIPTURE: Mark 10:17-22 CSB**

**Mark 10:17**— As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up, knelt down before him, and asked him, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

**Mark 10:18**— "Why do you call me good?" Jesus asked him. "No one is good except God alone."

**Mark 10:19**— You know the commandments: **Do not murder; do not commit adultery; do not steal; do not bear false witness; do not defraud; honor your father and mother.**

**Mark 10:20**— He said to him, "Teacher, I have kept all these from my youth."

**Mark 10:21**— Looking at him, Jesus loved him and said to him, "You lack one thing: Go, sell all you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

**Mark 10:22**— But he was dismayed by this demand, and he went away grieving, because he had many possessions.

**\*\*These are the very words from God for us this morning.\*\***

**PRAY:**

**EXEGESIS:**

**Mark 10:17**— As <sup>Jesus</sup> he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up, knelt down before him, and asked him, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Two weeks ago, we learned that Jesus was teaching about marriage and divorce in someone's home in an area across the Jordan River—Perea.

Last Sunday, we saw how parents came to the home because they wanted Jesus to bless their children.

And today, it appears that Jesus and the Twelve are trying to leave. <sup>Perea</sup>

Jesus is now traveling toward the city of Jerusalem.

Passover is near, and <sup>Jesus</sup> He knows that it's time for Him to suffer, die, and be resurrected. <sup>for our sin</sup>

So evidently, Jesus and the Twelve are heading out, they got their hiking sandals and backpack's on— and a man runs up to Jesus and kneels in front of Him.

<sup>Quite Dramatic</sup> — This man <sup>has</sup> everyone's <sup>Attention</sup>  
This man's behavior is highly unconventional for several reasons.

Number one, Jewish men don't run.

For a man to run in the first century, he had to pull up his robe, which was long.

Once he does that, he will be showing his legs—which was considered undignified.

Number two, it was not customary to kneel before a rabbi.

This man is showing Jesus is a profound act of respect.



And number three, this man asks a question...

"Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

So all three of these actions are highly unorthodox in Jewish culture.

There is practically not a single example of someone addressing a Rabbi as "good" in any of the Jewish writings.

However, there are many examples of God being called "the good" in the Mishnah.

The Mishnah is the Jewish collection of oral traditions written down.

These are not Biblical, but they were authoritative.

~~One of the names~~ the Rabbis also called God was "the Good One."

The Jews wouldn't say God's name, because they considered it holy.

But So, when the Jews spoke of someone as being good, it was always in the third person.

Meaning it was always used in speaking about someone, not to someone. *like this man is speaking to Jesus*

Let me get all geeky on you here because words matter.

And we're not seeing something in English that is important in verse 17.

*For us to understand this story, we have to understand this.*

There are two Greek words for the English word "good,"

- 1) kalos ("cuh-los")
- 2) agathos ("awg-uh-thos")

Kalos means "externally pleasing." *-good*

But the word used by this man is agathos, which means "intrinsicly good."  
*Not, external - but internal heart issue*

So this young man is appealing to Jesus' very character.

This man is referring to Jesus' essential nature—the very *core makeup* constitution of who Jesus is.

Since Jesus is the Messiah—the Son of God—~~Anointed one~~.

All those titles mean that Jesus is indeed intrinsicly good.

~~That~~ Jesus is good to His very core.

**Mark 10:17**— ... "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

The focus of the young man's question is what he has to "do."

He's hyper focused on his behavior and accomplishments. *Roone*

He expected Jesus to give him some type of spiritual task that would guarantee his entrance into Heaven.

He presumed that Jesus would prescribe some great deed he could do, which would settle things with God once and for all.

Here's the problem—This young man assumed that he had the talent, the ability, and the money to accomplish whatever Jesus told him to do. \*

This young man was indeed climbing a ladder of success.

The problem, however, is that it wasn't leading anywhere. Why?

Because Jesus taught us last week, eternal life is a gift to be received, not earned. \*



Let's see how Jesus responds to this young man.

**+** Mark 10:18— "Why do you call me good?"... *Agathos*

Jesus' question is not rhetorical.

It's like Jesus waits for an answer, but the young man doesn't have one.

Jesus was saying, "Don't you know that calling me good is calling me God?"

In other words, unless <sup>young man</sup> he was ready to proclaim that Jesus is God, it's not appropriate for him to address Jesus as 'Good Teacher.'

Now, we know this man as the "Rich Young Ruler."

Let's talk about that... *Rich? Young - self explanatory*

*Elder*  
Ruler may mean that he was a ruler in a local synagogue, but he's young.

~~So, we're not so sure about that.~~ *so there's a concern w/ that interpretation*

The word "ruler" can ~~also~~ mean that he was ~~simply~~ an influential man.

So his wealth and his good standing in the community would make him a prominent person ~~in his community.~~

In other words, everybody knows this guy, and they would say in passing, that he was a "good" man.

*\**  
*Now,* However, with the placement of this story being right after Jesus' teaching of how adults must come in child like faith, *- in every synoptic gospel - NOT An Accident*  
*last week*

It's best understood that this young man was indeed a ruler at the local synagogue.

*This guy knows how to keep the rules.*

*This is important to know*

Because God wants us to see the contrast between the two narratives.

So all that to say this...this young man is an exception to the rule.

He graduated with honors.

He has his Doctorate of Ministry degree in religious studies with a minor in business and finance.

This man is on the fast track in Judaism.

 He is climbing the stairway to Heaven. He's doing everything right.

It's like he sits under the feet of Saul of Tarsus.

*But he's not a Pharisee. He's a layman.*

~~Back to verse...~~

So why does Jesus stop him in his tracks with this question, **"Why do you call me good?"**

*~~~~~*  
Now, this man is sincere. He's not coming at Jesus like the Pharisees.

*~~~~~*  
But although His use of *good* was sincere, it's superficial.

Jesus recognizes that this young man has a fundamental problem with his misunderstanding of the word "good."

He's throwing that term around loosely. *-superficial*

He considered himself good, *|* as most people do.

How many people actually believe that they are a bad person?

When you ask the question, "are you a good person?"



Most people say, yes, I'm a good person—I'm not perfect—but I'm good.

It's as if <sup>young man</sup> he is asking this question from one good man <sup>himself</sup> to another. <sup>- Jesus</sup>

He wants to know how to guarantee that his goodness will pay off for eternal life.

He's asking Jesus to remove any lingering doubts that he has about his moral performance.

Because he definitely has doubts.

If he didn't have doubts, he wouldn't have asked the question.

In other words, this young man has a superficial concept of what moral goodness actually is.

It's as if he considered Jesus as a good rabbi— who has somehow mastered the secret of spiritual perfection by Himself.

So he comes to Jesus wanting to know what that secret is.

Here's the problem— He had no idea that this "good" Rabbi named Jesus ~~was~~ <sup>is</sup> actually YWHW wrapped up in flesh and bone.

cf. Hebrews 1:3 - <sup>Jesus</sup> the Son is the <sup>God's</sup> radiance of <sup>God's</sup> glory - the exact <sup>expression</sup> of <sup>God's</sup> nature <sup>ASAPHOS</sup>

So, Jesus asks his question to call attention to this young man's superficial understanding of true goodness.

So Jesus waits for an answer, and receives none.

This man is taken back a bit.

He's thinking to himself, "what kind of question is that?"

Jesus calls him to think about what he just said.

In other words, Jesus is saying, "Before you start throwing around titles, you had better think very carefully about what the consequences are.

Now, the young man should have responded, "*I call you good because you are God.*"

By responding this way, He would have answered his own question.

Because the thing he needed to do was just like everyone else.

Repent from sins  
To believe that Jesus is God.

But he didn't answer that way. So he remained silent.

It's like Jesus' question doused him with cold water.

Jesus isn't snarky here like he is with the Pharisees.

Jesus is trying to awaken this young man to his true spiritual state.

**X**  
*No one is good— except God alone.*

Oh boy! The young man thought that moral goodness was attainable through his own self-effort.

And Jesus corrects his theology.

Jesus says that God alone is the moral standard for goodness. Not A human

Now, Sermon in a sermon...



Many people, religious denominations, and cults have used verse 18 as a proof text that Jesus is not God.

This interpretation obviously goes against the rest of Scripture.

Jesus' statement rebuke's this man's poor understanding of the word *good* and redefine's it concerning God Himself.

**Question:** If the young man called Jesus "good," and only God is good, did he accept Jesus as God?

This concept of "good" is absolute, not relative. It's not subjective.

From a Biblical perspective, you can't compare goodness to anyone or anything but God Himself.

*Fluffy, intangible*

The world sees "good" as an abstract idea.

They say it's just a concept that doesn't have any actual meaning.

In other words, the world says that everybody has a sense of goodness.

Here's the rub...

*+*

**KEYPOINT:**

*The world sees people as good or bad—according to their own standards, but only God is absolutely, perfectly, and eternally good—according to Himself.*

*— God is the standard of goodness*

The world judges their goodness according to other people.

But God defines goodness according to His character, and His character is demonstrated in His law.

*→ His word*

And the law is precisely where Jesus takes this young man.

*The law is based on behavior*

Jesus says, "Oh, you want something to do; Let's back up and see how you've done with being good." *According to my law.*

**Mark 10:19**— You know the commandments: **Do not murder; do not commit adultery; do not steal; do not bear false witness; do not defraud; honor your father and mother.**"

*has turned into*  
Oh my! This ~~is~~ a moral examination.

Dear friends, don't miss this.

This is the kind of conversation that unbelievers might find on themselves on judgment day.

The purpose of God's law in the OT— is to show all people everywhere that we are sinners.

The law shows sinners how perfectly good God is— and how utterly evil we are.

And once we realize how wicked we are—because we have not kept the law— we come face to face with the inevitable reality that we are guilty.

The commandments Jesus quotes are from the second table of the law.

Meaning these are the commands that are focused on behavior and relationships with other people.

In other words, Jesus started with the easy ones!

The first table of the Ten Commandments are how we relate to God.



**Mark 10:20**— He said to <sup>Jesus</sup> him, "Teacher, I have kept all these from my youth."

Notice here that our young man is a quick learner.

He did not call Jesus a "good" Teacher, but "teacher." *So we see that he does not consider Jesus as God.*

Now obviously, he answer's Jesus' question from his own understanding.

He had not physically murdered anyone or committed adultery.

Can't you hear a sigh of relief? "Is that all I have to do? Done and done!"

So he says, "I've done all these things since my *Bar Mitzvah*."

Now it's interesting what Jesus didn't say at this point.

Jesus could have said, "*Dear friend, you are severely mistaken. You haven't kept any of these commandments since you woke up this morning.*"

*"Let me point you back to my latest sermon series, the Sermon on the Mount."*

- Have you ever been angry? It's called murder.
- Have you ever lusted after someone sexually? That's called adultery.
- Have your parents ever disciplined you? That's called disobedience.

① And in summary, that's all called sin—you're guilty.

③ If he'd had broken one commandment, it would be the same as breaking them all.

② Jesus gave him five easy commandments. There are another 600 to go!

The commandments are like a chain, and once you break one link in that chain, the chain is useless.

But Jesus didn't say this...instead, Jesus...

Just one  
GRACIOUS

**Mark 10:21**— Looking at him, Jesus loved him and said to him, "You lack one thing: Go, sell all you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

**Jesus looked at him**—The sense here is that Jesus searched his face.

Jesus looked intently into his eyes, and examined his composure and demeanor.

What Jesus found was that this young man was sincere.

Unfortunately, this young man was sincerely wrong and incredibly naive.

But, Jesus believes that this man came to him with a clear conscience.

This man was utterly and thoroughly lost, and that's okay.

Because whenever Jesus meets lost people— He responds with compassion.

Jesus knows that this young man sees himself as "good enough" to inherit eternal life— but being good enough is not good enough.

The law says you must be perfect, to inherit eternal life as God is perfect.

**cf. Psalm 18:30**—God, his way is perfect;  
the word of the Lord is pure.

Purity—it means that nothing is mixed in.

So, Jesus isn't harsh with him; in fact...



**Jesus loved him**—and because Jesus loves him, he speaks candidly.

There must have been something <sup>remarkable</sup> rare in this young man.

This is the only place in Mark's gospel where he uses that phrase, "Jesus <sup>loved him</sup> loved him."

Like a father to a son, Jesus speaks the truth.

Jesus is tender, yet direct.

At the end of the day, Jesus demands a radical change in his lifestyle.

Jesus is not speaking hyperbole.

This is not a parable for the young man.

Jesus means every single syllable. Why?

Because evidently, selling everything he owned was the only way for ~~this rich~~ <sup>him</sup> ~~young man~~ to come into a personal relationship with Himself—which is the one thing he lacks!   
<sup>—He doesn't know God—but he thinks he does.</sup>  
<sup>"Cool in a Box"—had bit more moral than himself.</sup>

Despite this man's so-called moral goodness and his good reputation among the community as a ruler of the local synagogue—he lives ~~in~~ in constant sin by breaking the First Commandment.

The first commandment—***"Don't have any other gods before me."*** (Ex. 20:1)

He worshiped the god of comfort.

His money gave him an extraordinary amount of comfort along with prestige and popularity.

His wealth was preventing him from coming to Jesus as a helpless, dependent child that Jesus said was necessary to enter the Kingdom of God from last week.

So, think about this with me... How ironic is the kingdom of God?

The children in the narrative from last week possess nothing, but Jesus says that the kingdom of God is theirs.

This young man who possesses everything still lacks everything!

The reason he has to sell all that he has is that Jesus has determined that's what it's going to take for him to become like a child and believe.

And then Jesus said, **Then come, follow me.**

Now, this I find mind-blowing.

Jesus issues the same command to this young man as he did to the Twelve Disciples.

This rich young ruler was just invited to become one of Jesus' personal Disciples.

DANG! Wow!

Now, can't you just see the world slowing down and stopping for this man to answer?

So what's it going to be?

Jesus is looking at him with his loving eyes that are piercing through his soul waiting for an answer.

What'cha going to do, young man? All eyes are on you.

Done

he has done it all

Off the irony of Heaven

this man must be broken. Jesus loves this man - will do whatever it takes to break him.

ooo

Picture this



This is the most critical decision he will ever make for all eternity.

**Mark 10:22**— But he was dismayed by this demand, and he went away grieving, because he had many possessions.

He was dismayed.

The impact of Jesus's demand must have been visible on his face.

In other words, "the man's face fell."

His <sup>sadness</sup> ~~pain~~ was clear from his countenance.

It was as if the sky had become overcast with a storm.

There was increasing darkness on the man's face.

His expression turned to deep gloom.

And then we read one of the saddest verses in Mark's gospel.

*he went away grieving,*

He turned away from Jesus.

The saddest verse in all of Scripture, in my opinion, is Genesis 3:10.

God calls to Adam in the Garden of Eden, "*where are you?*"

And Adam said, "*I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid myself from you.*"

In other words, Adam said the same thing as Peter,  
"Get away from me Lord, I'm a sinful man. (Luke 5:8)"

This young man who ran to Jesus with excitement and enthusiasm now walks away from this same Jesus who spoke those words to Adam.

***He walks away, grieved.***

He wasn't just grieved but shocked and devastated.

Jesus just leveled him with grace and truth.

He couldn't believe the demand of Jesus. It was so unexpected.

This guy was so wealthy, but the cost for eternal life was too high—even for him.

Jesus' diagnosis of this young man was correct.

He wanted God, but not at the <sup>price</sup> cost of his gold.

**KEYPOINT: #2**

*Obedience, no matter what the cost, brings joy.*

*Disobedience, no matter the comfort, brings sorrow.*

The man's true character had been exposed.

Jesus peeled back the veneer.

This young man wasn't as good as he thought he was. It turns out he wasn't "good" at all.

Amazing what happens when you dump into someone really hard - Scripture once again tells the shocking truth about mankind.

*You see what spills out*



The Apostle Paul writes...

+ cf. **Romans 3:12**— All have turned away;  
 all alike have become worthless.  
 There is no one who does what is good,  
 not even one.,

This man did exactly what Scripture says all men will do...they will turn away from God because they are not "inherently good."

It's been this way from the beginning.

*pharisees*  
 Paul didn't write that...The Psalmist proclaims the depravity of man not once, but twice— Psalm 14:3 and 53:3.

+ **KEYPOINT**  
*Rich Young Ruler*  
 He was materially wealthy and spiritually bankrupt.

This young man walks away from the most incredible offer known to mankind—to be a disciple and son of the One True Living God.

*He*  
 We choose to walk away and seek a second opinion on salvation. - *Chuck shopping*

*A salvation*  
 One that won't cost quite that much.

*A salvation*  
 One to where he thinks he can have God and his money at the same time.

*But Jesus doesn't share His throne or His glory - He Himself said, "No one can serve two masters"*

**PREACH:**

I find it fascinating that when this young man asked Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life, Jesus preached the law to him, and not the gospel.

Jesus has been preaching, **Repent, for the Kingdom of God is near,** for the last ten chapters!

If someone asks us that question, "how do I get into Heaven?"—What are you going to say?

I guess that you'll quote John 3:16

cf. **John 3:16**—For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

cf. **John 3:17**—For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

Or maybe you show them...

cf. **Romans 10:9**—If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

But Jesus doesn't preach the gospel; He preaches the law. Why?

As a general rule, people are not ready for the good news of the gospel until they bear the bad news.

And the bad news is that God's law judges and sentences ~~them~~ every single one of us as guilty sinners before a Holy God.

We Are All Guilty.  
Unfortunately, many people falsely believe the only qualification to get into heaven is death.

"What do you have to do to get into Heaven?" Die.

Dear friend, do you think that?



Do you believe, as this Rich Young Ruler did, that you're morally "good enough" to inherit eternal life?

I'm begging you not to make the same mistake this young man did.

Please don't turn and walk away from Jesus. - You're not good enough.

It is written...

**+** cf. **Isaiah 64:6 NASB**—For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment;

misty, raunchy stinky Holy Rag

↳ Good works

God has leveled the playing field when it comes to Heaven.

for eternal life - that's the irony of Heaven.

We are to do one thing and that is to come to Jesus in child-like faith and believe that He is God and he came to save you from your sins.

Dear friends, repent & believe - for the Kingdom of God is near,

**PRAYER ROOM:**

Jesus is coming back soon - something has clicked over the past year - we are seeing the depravity of man like never before - Jesus is coming soon.

And you have questions; we are available after the service. There is a prayer room through the foyer and to the right.

**PRAY:**

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