



‘Now!’ Sermon Series

Sermon #39

‘Money or Messiah?’

Mark 10:17-31

Sunday, February 9th, 2025

This Past Wednesday in NOW Sermon Series:

- This past Wednesday we had the honor and privilege of studying Mark 10:13-16, and seeing that Jesus loved the children.
- I preached a message entitled *‘The Importance of Children in the Kingdom of God’*
 - I asked the question: *How does Jesus show us the importance that children have in the Kingdom of God?*
 - **Truth #1: *Children are NOT an annoyance. (v. 13)***

- **Truth #2: *Children have TOTAL access to Jesus. (v. 14)***
- **Truth #3: *Children have a HUMBLE Approach. (v. 15-16)***

- Based on this past Wednesday’s sermon, I hope we all see that as individuals and a Church, we all must have child-like faith, as well as a life that teaches our children about Jesus.

- *Remember, if we have to verbally tell them our priorities, then we probably haven’t been showing them with our actions...*

‘Money or Messiah?’

Mark 10:17-31

Sermon in a Sentence:

In this passage we find that the Rich Young Ruler chose Money over the Messiah when we look at the Fearful Response, Fundamental Reality, and the Future Award that awaits true followers of Christ.

Intro:

- ****Illustration****
 - *Money* cannot buy happiness, but it sure can buy *misery*.
 - Cornelius Vanderbilt is known to be the 2nd richest American, behind John D. Rockefeller, with an estimated \$105 Million with his death in 1877, and over \$200 Billion in 2021 dollars.

- - **Cornelius Vanderbilt, born in the late 1790s and a descendant of Dutch Farmers from the Netherlands, found his wealth in the steamboat shipping industry, and made nearly 30 Million of his wealth from the railroad business later in his life.**
- With all this money, he lived a relative moderate lifestyle, though still living in a huge mansion with several high dollar race horses.
 - **He had 11 children that grew to adulthood, but was known as a horrible husband, and even worse father.**
 - With 3 sons living to adulthood, he was known to ignore the daughters that he had. Viewing his sons as a way to ‘increase wealth’, make more money.
- **He spent the last 8 months of his life in very poor health with chronic conditions.**
 - It is said that a few days before he died he uttered the words ‘what good is all this money now?’
- He had given \$1 Million dollars (the largest charity donation in America to that point), to the founding of what is now Vanderbilt University. And gave \$50,000 to a local Church so that they could have land for a cemetery, and that he could be buried there.
 - **Other than that, there are very little monetary donations he gave to charity.**
- After he had already passed, he gave 95% of his wealth to the only one of his sons who worked for him, and the rest was split between his other children and spouse.
- **Cornelius Vanderbilt’s will has been an example for decades on how NOT to disperse your estate once you’re no longer living.**
 - The money that was passed down was used lavishly, and within just 2 generations, the entire wealth was completely gone.
- **Along with the family having alcohol additions, drug addictions and gambling problems with what seemed to be each descendant of Cornelius Vanderbilt.**
- **I believe Cornelius Vanderbilt was right, what good is all this money now?**
 - It brought pain and misery to his family that he left behind.
- This morning, we get to look at the story of the rich young ruler in Mark’s Gospel.
 - **We will see, that Money is not all it’s cracked up to be. We must stop pursuing the American Dream, and pursue the Great Commission.**
Read Mark 10:17-31

Question to Ask:

How does the story of the rich young ruler show us that the Messiah is more important than money (and any other thing for that matter)?

Truth #1: *Fearful Response.* (vv. 17-22)

- What's so interesting about our passage of scripture this morning, is that the story of this rich young man, comes right after Mark 10:13-16, where we looked at the trust of a child.
- Scholar James Edwards rightfully said ***'The rich man in the present story, with his possessions and social status, is a striking contrast to the simple children of the previous story.'***
 - ***Here we have a young man, who puts his trust in his own material possessions. As well as his personal self-righteousness.***
 - Expecting those two things to give him eternal life.
 - The reason I believe verses 17-22 represent a fearful response, is because of how the rich man responds after his conversation with Jesus.
 - ***He comes seeking Him for the answer to life, and once he is given the answer, he decides to turn away and live for the world. As many people do.***
 - We must remember, that just because someone has everything in this life, doesn't in any way, shape or form, guarantee their standing in the next.

- Let's dive into this verses as we look at **3** specific things that unfold that led to the fearful response...

● ***The Right Source.* (v. 17)**

- '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?"
- Luke 18:18 calls this man a ruler (meaning he would have had some kind of authority over an area/province).
- Matthew 19:22 calls this person young.
 - ***Which is why we (me included) often call him the young rich ruler.***
 - ***From what society deems today as successful, this man had it all.***
 - Power. Prestige. Plenty of Money.
 - ***May we always remember that what the world views as success and 'making' it, is not always how God views it.***
- Notice that verse 17 tells us that he ran up to Jesus, and fell on his knees. This would show haste and submission, along with a desire to become a disciple of Jesus. ***(So many people want to 'follow' Jesus, until they realize the cost).***

- This young man came in the right way, to the right person, with the *right question*.
 - ‘Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?’
 - *Here’s a person who in the eyes of the world, had everything. Yet, he asks Jesus for the one thing he does not have, eternal life.*
 - (Jesus will identify well with this person since at this time, Jesus would’ve been around 32).
 - *What the ‘young rich ruler’ didn’t realize, is that the richest person that day (any day), was Jesus.*
 - What Jesus did was explained by Paul in the Church to Corinth in 2nd Corinthians 8:9...
 - ‘For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.’
 - The right person, the right approach, and the right question? Jesus is ready with a statement that will rock this young man’s (and ours) world.
- *The Ready Statement. (vv. 18-21)*
 - ‘And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. 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.” 20 And he said to him, “Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth.” 21 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.”
- Yet again in Mark and in the Gospels, Jesus does not answer the question directly.
 - *Maybe because Jesus knew that the question the man was asking was not the actual question on his heart.*
- *Jesus begins with a theological question, ‘Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.’*
 - Jesus doesn’t respond to the flattery and flowery greeting of the young man, He shifts the focus back on God.
 - While this phrase by Jesus as been somewhat puzzling through decades of scholarship, we must keep in mind that at this time in Mark’s Gospel He (Jesus) has not put His messianic identity on a platter.
 - Remember John 5:19...
 - ‘So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but

only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father^[a] does, that the Son does likewise.’

○ ***By posing this initial question, I think Jesus is showing the young man that right off the bat He must be careful with his words. As we all should strive to do.***

- Notice also that posture of the young man’s heart was entirely wrong.
- The young man said ‘what must I do to inherit eternal life?’
 - ***That’s just the thing, whether it’s money, job, family, Church, or whatever, there is NOTHING that YOU CAN DO TO GET ETERNAL LIFE, other than accepting what Christ has done for you!***
- Jesus doesn’t give the man time to respond, and immediately says ‘You know the commandments’.
 - The fact that the young man asked what he must **do** to inherit eternal life, suggests that he links behavior as the ultimate ladder to the reward of religion, which many mistakenly do.
- ***So, Jesus takes him to the moral law, the Ten Commandments and lists the last 6.***

■ The horizontal commandments, which affect how we treat others.

- Jesus response with the usage of the 10 commandments is important: ***I believe Jesus is showing that despite his moral zeal and ‘good works’ something is missing in this man. Even if he keeps all these commandments, something is missing.***
 - ***Something will ALWAYS be missing in your life if Jesus is not in it and the center of it.***
- Even if the man keeps all the commandments, he’s still lacking something.
 - ***Which is why we don’t trust in our ability to keep the Law, but in our relationship to the Lord.***
- Either in a defensive reaction or a triumphant exclamation, the young man replies with this in verse 20, ‘***And he said to him, “Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth.”***
 - Our deeds/abilities can’t stack up to the blood of Jesus and His righteousness.
- And Jesus says this in verse 21, ‘***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.”***
 - ***Because Jesus loves him, He directly challenges him.***

- A sign that Jesus loves you is that He challenges you through His Word. The Christian life was never supposed to be easy.
- David Garland said *'He does not try to spare his feelings or avoid offending him but candidly speaks the truth. The man regards himself as respectively good, but being respectably good is not good enough.'*
 - *Even as hard as it can be in my own personal life, I do love that Jesus is REAL with us and tells us the truth about what we need to change!*
 - Jesus is not like the culture, your friends, or even your family at times. He is not fake and He doesn't sugar coat! Why would He? He's the King of Kings!
- Jesus wanted this young man to follow the first commandment (Exodus 20:3) and allow God to truly be God in his life.
- Jesus didn't just give this young man '1 thing' to do, but 4 directives:
 - *'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.'*
 - Go. Sell. Give. Follow me.

- *Now we must be careful to realize that this particular demand that Jesus gives to this young man was not a general command for all people.*
 - It was specific to the rich young ruler. *BUT it could be directed to you this morning if wealth is occupying the place that only God should have in your life.*
- *For you, it might not be wealth, it could be:*
 - Your Job.
 - Your Car.
 - Fishing.
 - Your favorite sport's team.
 - Social Media.
 - You name it, anything that you place in front of God, is your idol and Jesus wants you to step away from it.
 - *To Go. Get rid of it/sell it. Give the proceeds away. Follow Jesus.*
 - Everything+nothing=Jesus.
- Dr. Daniel Aiken said *'The call to discipleship is a call to radical trust and commitment to Jesus. Jesus challenges all of us to put away anything that is an obstacle to our following Him.'*
 - Now we will see the ruler is stunned.
- *The Ruler Stunned. (v. 22)*

- ‘Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.’
- ***Word Study***
 - The english word ‘disheartened’ comes from the greek word ‘*Stugnazo*’ **στυγνάσας** and literally means to be appalled, shocked, gloomy and downcast.
 - This word only occurs here and in Matthew 16:3.
- ***I’m sure the young rich ruler was so appalled because there were probably very few times that he was ever told ‘no’ in his life.***
 - No matter your possessions or political and social standing, when Jesus tells you to do something, you should do it, but you do have a choice.
- ***The ruler makes his choice, and decided to walk away. Remember, you have the choice. Which one are you making?***
 - ‘He had many possessions’ makes it clear that his gold would remain his god.
- The young man got the right answer from the right source, but gave the wrong response.
 - So far this morning, we’ve seen the fearful, dreadful and gloomy response of those who choose to walk away from Jesus.

Truth #2: *Fundamental Reality.* (vv. 23-27)

- Now, Jesus looks to His disciples to explain and unpack the event that just occurred.
 - ***The fundamental reality that Jesus was trying to get the young rich ruler to understand, was that he would need to honor God and follow Him in complete trust, like a child! But he wouldn’t do it.***
 - As Tim Kellar wrote ***‘When Jesus called this young man to give up his money, the man started to grieve, because money was for him what the Father was for Jesus. It was the center of his identity. To lose his money would have been to lose himself.’***
 - To leave Jesus is to forsake the Kingdom of God and the possibility of true life
 - In verses 23-27, Jesus goes from the rich man to the disciples...
 - I believe there are **2** important things to point out here...
- ***Deterrents of Salvation.* (vv. 23-25)**
 - ‘And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!” **24** And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, “Children, how difficult it is[**a**] to enter the kingdom of God! **25** 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.”
- Verse 23 does not mean that Jesus was putting down wealth and promoting poverty.
 - *I do not believe that the Lord has any issue with his people making money as long as we tithe and don't let it become an idol.*
 - *Anything that gives someone a prideful streak and has an addictive quality to it can potentially become the priority of ones life, and then all of a sudden the ways and things of God fall by the wayside.*
 - In verse 24, the disciples are shocked by what Jesus has said. So, Jesus says it again.
 - David Garland said *'Even those who know in their heads that money does not buy happiness or heaven still wish in their hearts that they had more.'*
 - For the first and only time in Mark's Gospel, Jesus addresses the disciples as *'children'*.
 - I believe this is in part to remind them that they must become like children to grow in their faith and to enter the Kingdom of God!
 - *Children, as you know have very little concept of money. How hard it is to come by and how much it can truly acquire.*
- *Possibly Tell Illustration of being a boy at wellford, learning the power of money*
 - In verse 26, Jesus uses quite colorful hyperbole to prove the point that those who are ruled by money, cannot also be ruled by God.
 - *You cannot serve both God and money. Matthew 6:24-26.*
 - The camel was one of the largest animals in that part of the world, so the thought of trying to squeeze it (humps and all btw) into the eye of a needle would be funny, but also impossible.
 - *Which was to show us and the disciples: Salvation is harder than we think because it's completely the opposite of what society has trained us to do.*
 - We can't work for it, be good enough, and we can't earn it on our own. We must simply receive the Gospel by God's Grace.
 - *That day, and even in our day, Jesus turns the value system upside down...*
 - *Description of Salvation. (vv. 26-27)*
 - Jesus gave us the deterrent of salvation: wealth or anything else that we put in front of Him.
 - Now, Jesus gives a description of salvation that doesn't depend on man, but on the power of God!

- ‘And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to him, [b] “Then who can be saved?”’²⁷ Jesus looked at them and said, “With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God.” Mark 10:26-27
- *Notice here that the reaction of the disciples does parallel that of the rich man.*
 - *They were so astonished that in verse 26 they ask, ‘well who then can be saved?’*
- We must remember that most of the disciples were brought up in the religion of Judaism. And Judaism was very guilty of its own ‘prosperity theology.’
 - *Judaism used verses like Job 1:10, Job 42:10, Psalms 128:1-2, and Isaiah 3:10 to show that wealth and riches were God’s favor. Obviously this was eisegesis on their part.*
- So, Jesus corrects their bad theology. *He shows them that wealth, or anything else for that matter can create a barrier in our relationship with Jesus.*
 - Which is why we must bring that barrier down.
- Jesus answer to their question, is without a doubt, one of the greatest theological affirmations we find in scripture:

- Jesus looked at them and said, “With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God.”
 - *No matter what you’re facing or going through today, it’s really important to remember and understand that you can’t do it alone. What you’re going through today or will go through, is completely impossible on your own.*
 - *But as Jesus Himself says in this text, it is not impossible with God. All things are possible WITH Him.*
 - I love what Dr. Daniel Aiken said *‘If you desire for Christ to be your Savior, you have to replace what you have been looking to as savior.’*
 - The fundamental reality is that you can’t do it alone. No matter how hard you try. You’ve got to give it to Jesus, and you can do it today!
 - We’ve seen the Fearful Response, the Fundamental Reality, now Jesus gives us a glimpse of the future reward that we have in Him.
- Truth #3: *Future Reward. (vv. 28-31)***
- Jesus has said all of these ‘earth shattering words’ to the disciples, and of course, you know who decides to speak up... PETER
 - ‘Peter began to say to him, “See, we have left everything and followed you.”²⁹ 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, **30** 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. **31** But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”

- **Peter speaks up and tells Jesus what He already knows and has seen. That these disciples really did leave everything and come and follow Him.**
 - One of the most pivotal moments in my faith is when I left everything I knew, and came to Gaston where I knew no one or anything.
 - It was one of those moments in my life where I knew that my relationship with God was real, my call from God was real, and that where He leads, I will drop everything and go.
 - *That's what the Gospel is! A lifetime of discipleship and following our Lord. Wherever He leads I go is not just supposed to be beautiful lyrics that you sing at the end of the service while you're thinking about the fried chicken you're*

about to put into your mouth!
NO! It's to be a lifestyle.

- Jesus gives the message to us, and His disciples, that when we give everything up for Him, it is indeed worth it...
- **The Road of Discipleship is Worth it.**
 - Jesus responds to Peter, and explains that the sacrifices of him and of **ALL** the disciples will be rewarded a hundred times.
 - Notice what Jesus says we may have to give up in order to follow Him.
 - **Home.**
 - **Family.**
 - **Land.**
 - **Guess what Church?! It costs a lot to follow Jesus!**
 - If your idea of following Jesus is coming here for an hour a week and leaving and saying 'I got my Jesus fill', you're completely wrong!!!
 - **While it does cost to follow Jesus, He is so clear here that the blessings are much greater, and they will be in Heaven.**
 - Imagine how amazing it will be to one day see the face of our Lord that we have been serving.
 - Notice also that Jesus says this life will come with persecutions. Surprisingly enough, a blessing is persecution.

■ *To be a member of God's Kingdom is to share all that is His right?*

- This includes persecution. Think about how much He suffered for you and I?

Conclusion:

- This morning we've looked at a familiar passage, but I hope you can walk away with a familiar truth.
 - *Money can't buy you happiness. Only the Lord Jesus.*
 - *With what you have in your life right now, if all of that were to go away, would you still have everything? Meaning, would you still have Jesus?*
- **Before you leave today, make sure it's the Messiah over Money.**
 - **Truth #1: *Fearful Response.* (vv. 17-22)**
 - **Truth #2: *Fundamental Reality.* (vv. 23-27)**
 - **Truth #3: *Future Reward.* (vv. 28-31)**