



## THE GOSPEL OF MARK

Study Guide Full  
Mark 10:17-31  
March 8, 2020

Continuing on along the seasonal journey of Lent, towards our ultimate destination of Jerusalem, we come upon Jesus' fascinating discussion with the rich man in Mark 10, replete with one of the New Testament's most memorable lines: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle..."

In speaking to the rich man, Jesus makes clear that following him entails a totality of surrender that, if we're honest, feels just as uncomfortable for us as it did for the rich man 2000 years ago. And so, if we don't feel at least some discomfort in meditating upon this text, then we're probably not sitting quietly enough with it, nor reading ourselves deeply enough through it.

And yet, if ever the gloom of the rich man should threaten to undo us, let us hear those loving words of our faithful Good Teacher: "With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God."

*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?" 18 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." 22 Disheartened  
by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he  
had great possessions.

## Mark 10:17-31

Notes:

23 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 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." 26 And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to him, "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." 28 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."

### Commentary Notes:

v. 17. Moving through Judea on his journey towards Jerusalem, Jesus is interrupted by the question that is still the most important religious inquiry for many, including some in the church: "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Generally speaking, running was considered undignified in ancient

### Discussion Questions:

*Reflect: "Good Teacher":*  
How has our God been a good teacher unto you in the past few months? What has he been teaching you?

Middle Eastern culture. As such, Mark's description of the man's approach to Jesus speaks to his eagerness and effusiveness, to inquire about what Jewish works of righteousness he must fulfill to merit eternal life.

**v. 18.** Jesus' remark over the adjective "good" surely deals with the nature of the man's question; as William Lane notes in his commentary: "The inquirer's idea of goodness was defined by human achievement. He undoubtedly regarded himself as 'good' in that he was confident that he had fulfilled the commands...now he hopes to discover from another 'good' man what he can do to assure eternal life...Jesus' answer forces him to recognize that his only hope is an utter reliance upon God, who alone can bestow eternal life."

**vv. 19-21.** Note that in Jesus' reference to the Decalogue, the 10 commandments from Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5, he lists those commands that deal with human relationships. And, in adding the command to sell everything and give to the poor, Jesus again defines our relationship to heaven in terms of our human relationships. This fact seems

*Study:* What is the literary context of this passage? What did we read a few weeks ago in 10:13-16? How do those verses relate to these?

*Praise:* Praise God for his goodness. Have you heard Israel Houghton's gospel song "You are Good"? Taken a listen (YouTube), and consider singing along.

*Discuss:* In Vancouver, what is contemporary culture's understanding of "goodness"? How does society say that we are to achieve goodness?

*Reflect:* Before becoming a Christian, what was your experience of trying, and inevitably failing, to "inherit eternal life"? Share with your Connection Group members, to learn more about one another's stories.

*Discuss:* During this Lenten season, there may be some who have troubling understanding the practice of Lent, criticizing Lenten practices as essentially an attempt to inherit eternal life. How would you thoughtfully respond to such an incorrect critique? What is the true essence of Lent?

*Study:* Reread the 10 commandments from Exodus 20. As an interesting and helpful exercise, rephrase each of the commandments in positive language. The scope of the commandments necessarily broadens!

*Confess:* Having done the exercise from the first question above, sit quietly with your 10 readjusted commandments. Let them measure your heart. Confess your failure to keep these commands, and rest assured in his grace.

to balance our passage, suggesting that just as we can by no means inherit eternal life by our good works, so we also can by no means speak of eternal life apart from a faith that works: our faith in Christ is inextricably linked to the good works that to which he has called us.

So then, gazing upon the man in love, Jesus makes clear—through a discussion of human relationship—what one thing this man lacked in his relationship to Christ: the full surrender and utter reliance upon God that is true discipleship.

**vv. 22-28.** The man's "face fell" is a weak translation to express the rare Greek verb *στυγνάζω* (*stugnazo*): it refers to a "gloom or darkness" brought on by something "shocking or appalling." Note, also, that it is cognate (related by root) with something "hated or despicable." So Stuart's English translation would be: "galled and appalled, gloomy and fumed, he went away vexed and distressed."

Why? Because the love of riches is indeed that debilitating to going deeper in discipleship. It demands a miracle.

**vv. 29-31.** In God's economy, where the first are last and the last are first, there is a marvelous math of multiplication that is calculated in the class of discipleship, on the abacus of suffering and persecution. Such is the call to "follow him."

*Discuss:* What do you make of the fact that quoting the ten commandments in a discussion of eternal life, Jesus speaks not about our worship or about our doctrine, but about the way we treat others? How does this strike you?

*Meditate:* If Jesus were to gaze at you in love, encouraging you to journey ever closer with him on the journey of discipleship, what one thing might he lovingly identify that you lack? In other words, what are those idols that are keeping you from more fully relying on him in your life, and from more fully experiencing his great love?

*Reflect:* What are those things that you personally have had to leave behind in the past to follow Christ? How have you seen God meet you in ministering to your place of surrender? Encourage one another.

*Discern:* The Lenten season is a wonderful one to consider our actions of charity and our gifts of giving, along the path of leaving everything and following him. As a Connection Group, ask the Holy Spirit: What is one specific way that we can care for a few particular people who are in need? Ask for his strength to step out.

*Pray:* How is the Spirit moving you to a greater place of surrender and sacrifice along the journey of discipleship, especially during this Lenten season? Might this be with regard to your finances, time, or relationships? Pray for his guidance and grace, resting in his love and power.