

Sermon Title: Then Who Can Be Saved?
Scripture Text: Mark 10:17-27

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 5-19-19

Three Sundays ago, before I left for Romania, Moldova, and Russia, I took us to a different section of God's Word, staying away from our series in the Gospel of Mark, as we had just done Easter and I didn't want to start a text, and then have to leave part of it for several weeks; so we've put off, until today, where we come to in Mark Chapter 10, which—Lord willing—we'll look at Verses 17 through 27, and we're *still* not going to finish what I didn't want to get started and have to leave, but we'll get to it, because we can come back next Lord's Day.

As we come to this passage of God's Word: How can you have eternal life? How would you answer that? What does it take to get to heaven? What must you do to be saved? How can a person be "born again"? What is the price of spiritual, eternal redemption? What does it mean to be a Christian? How can you be, genuinely, a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ? Those are all different ways—and valid ways—ultimately, to ask the same question. And that question was posed in yet other words to Jesus by a man who meant it seriously. But the way Jesus answers him in our passage today is not what you probably would expect. In our text for this morning—a classic text—this encounter leads to one of the most profound things Jesus ever said. And I realize I probably shouldn't say that, because *everything* the Son of God said was profound (see Jn. 7:46).

Let's put it in its context: The place is somewhere in Perea; Perea is that region of Israel to the east of Jerusalem, and mostly on the east side of the Jordan River. The time is late winter to early spring of A.D. 30. The circumstance is that, it's just a couple of months, now, before the Cross. Jesus is beginning to make His way toward Jerusalem for the final time. He's gone there and back very quickly, never entering Jerusalem, but going around the corner behind the Mount of Olives to Bethany, where He raised Lazarus from the dead; and then, He came back to Perea again. His disciples are with Him. He is concentrating intently on teaching them about the things that will soon take place when they get to Jerusalem; and He is responding to people along the way—and all the time, with the mindset of instructing them in the most important things they need to know, because He's going to ascend to the Father, and He's going to entrust to them the ministry of the gospel. This encounter before us today is fascinating in its own right. But as I say, it provoked Jesus to say *very* important things to His disciples and to the others who were following Him; and since they're written in the Scriptures, He says and to us, as well (see Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11).

The man who came to Jesus with the million-dollar question that day was out of "lifelines." He thought he could figure out the answer, thought he would get the answer from Jesus; but after Jesus talked to him about it, the man *walked away* disappointed and grieved. Now, what do we know about this man? Well, this incident is recorded in Matthew 19, Luke 18, and Mark 10; we have to put all of them together to get the full picture. Matthew 19:20 tells us that he was a "young man." Verse 22 in our passage tells us that he was wealthy, and he "owned much property." Luke 18:18 says that he was "a ruler," which implies that he was a leader of the local synagogue; *that* implies that he was trying to live out the prescribed lifestyle of the Pharisees, because the Pharisees controlled the teaching in all of the synagogues. You roll all of that together and you can see why, this passage is usually filed under the heading: "The Rich Young Ruler"—he was rich, he was young, he was a spiritual leader.

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Excerpts from our text today are going to help us frame our understanding of this famous encounter; I'm aiming at two of them today, and there is another for next time. First of all: "One thing you lack"—we'll see why Jesus said that. Then: "Who can be saved?"—that's the crucial question in this text. And then next time, we'll see why the Apostles said, "We left everything," and what Jesus says about that.

So let's start with, "One thing you lack," and we'll jump in at Mark Chapter 10, and Verse 17—"As He was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and asked Him, 'Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' " (NASB, and throughout, unless otherwise noted). Alright, put this in its proper setting: This happened as Jesus "was setting out on a journey"; we know, ultimately, that that journey was His journey to Jerusalem for His appointment with the Cross. All we know is that, this happened on one day's part of the journey, as they were heading out. Maybe this was when He left Perea; maybe it was after He had left the original starting point, and it was just, as He was leaving on one day, after wherever they had stayed for that night.

But there's an interesting tidbit here that Matthew includes, that Mark doesn't. Mark was writing for a Roman audience; he doesn't say as much about the Jewish stuff as Matthew does, because Matthew wrote for the Jews. And even though a lot of our English translations don't reflect it, Matthew starts this section in Greek with the words: "And behold." Matthew is pointing out that, there's something here that he considers *very* important; so he's saying, in essence, "Look carefully! Pay attention to this! This is *really* significant!"

It's particularly important for what it teaches us about how corrupted the doctrine of the Pharisees, and their theological system, had become. They were actually teaching salvation by works, which is the *antithesis* of the message of the Scriptures (see Rom. 10:3-4)! In the course of this conversation, this man is going to address Jesus both as "Teacher"—that's how Matthew records it—and "Good Teacher"—Mark and Luke record that. Jesus took a cue from the word "good" for the first part of His response to this guy.

Now, notice: the guy came respectfully; he actually "ran up" to Jesus, so you get the idea, there was some urgency involved—he didn't want Jesus to get out of town before he had a chance to talk to Him. And he came and he "knelt before Him." The verb tense also indicates, they probably carried on more conversation than what is recorded, even when you combine Matthew and Mark and Luke.

Jesus challenged the young man on calling Him "good." Matthew includes a little fuller description of what the man asked: he said, "What good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?" Now, you understand that, neither Matthew nor Mark nor Luke contain all of what was said; you combine them, you get all that is recorded for us in Scripture, but there was probably even more than that. But the difference in details—though it's interesting and gives you the fullest possible picture of the conversation—the differences aren't important. What *is* important is that, here is a man who was a leading teacher among the Jews—so put him in the same category as Nicodemus; Nicodemus is called "*the* teacher" of the Jews (Jn. 3:10), this man is "a leader" of a synagogue of the Jews. Here he is, setting himself up week after week,

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Sabbath after Sabbath in the synagogue, telling people how to know God; and he realized: he doesn't have eternal life! He's on the outside looking in! His question also reveals his mindset: he believed in salvation by works; and from his later comment, you'll see that, he actually believed that he was successfully keeping the commandments of God! From that, we learn what the Pharisaical attitude actually produces: when you focus on external rules and regulations—the idea of becoming holy from the outside-in by doing things—that leads you to completely miss the point of the sinfulness of your heart (see Lk. 18:9; cf. Prov. 30:12). Your own spiritual bankruptcy gets buried under that mountain of performance, and your need for God's grace, from beginning to end, is absolutely a foreign concept.

Now, as you work your way through this encounter, I want you to remember two things: This man is a religious Pharisee. Now, it doesn't *call* him a Pharisee; but being a leader of a synagogue, the Pharisees controlled that part of the life of the Jews. So he was a religious Pharisee *who sought out Jesus*. Now, that means, he's a little bit of a rogue; because when the Pharisees seek out Jesus in any public sort of way, it's always to argue with Him, fight with Him, discredit Him, try to get Him tripped up in one of their theological disputes. This guy was actually trying to deal with his heart. Secondly, I want you to observe that, Jesus knows his heart, and His responses to this man are not His most general responses—they are tailor-made for this guy, *personally*.

So, look at it, Mark 10, Verse 18—"And Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.' " So He's kind of saying, "Are you calling Me God?" That was pretty significant. Compare that with Matthew 19:17, a little longer description: "He said to him, 'Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is only One who is good; but if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.' " Now, Jesus's response probably would've been quite different if the man hadn't set the tone by saying, "*What shall I do to inherit eternal life?*" Or, "*What good thing shall I do?*" The question was answered quite differently by the Apostle Paul. The Philippian jailor, who was *unschooled* in the religious good-works system of the Pharisees—and he was terrified he about to lose his life—he simply said, "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30). And he got a very different answer: "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved" (vs. 31), which is a proper answer. *This* answer is tailor-made to *this* man in *his* life—with his personal hang-ups and sins, at that time in history, in light of his position as a leader and teacher of a works-righteousness system.

Now, if you heard the man's question, you would probably say something like, "Repent!" or, "Receive Jesus Christ," like John Chapter 1 puts it; or, "Believe in Christ and confess Him as Lord," like Romans Chapter 10 puts it. So why is Jesus's answer so different? It seems almost abrupt and evasive. It would have been perfectly correct for Jesus to say, "Believe in Me and you will be saved." He could have said, "Were you there the day that I said, 'Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest...for your souls' (Matt. 11:28-29)?" But He didn't say that. Why? Because that wasn't what this guy needed hear! Jesus knew this man's heart, and He also wanted to teach the Twelve—and the others who were present when the encounter took place—that they needed to know, in the wisdom that God gives, how to answer, and to give an appropriate answer, in every situation.

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Now, He says, "No one is good except God alone." That was Jesus's way of pointing out to the man that, by asking Him the question about eternal life, and phrasing it that way, and addressing Him as "Good Teacher"—the guy was really close to admitting that Jesus is God! He probably wasn't *thinking* that way; but Jesus points out that, that's where his question would lead. And since the man didn't respond to the comment about "God alone is good," it seems clear that Jesus not only knew what was in his heart, He also knew that this man *didn't* accept His deity, or didn't even maybe know the claims that He had made to His deity.

So instead of a more direct answer—which this guy probably wouldn't have understood—Jesus took the conversation along a line of reasoning that a zealous Jew under the teaching of the Pharisees *would* understand: He says, "If you wish to enter into [eternal] life, keep the commandments." Now, there's nothing *wrong* with that answer. In other words, it's like He's saying, "You're a devoted and knowledgeable Jew! Why, I hear you're the leader of that synagogue we just passed last evening as we came into town. You know what to do! Why are you asking Me? I haven't taught anything that isn't already written in the Scriptures. If you want to have eternal life, you know what to do—go do it!" "Keep the commandments" is exactly what this guy had been told all of his life; and as a ruler among the Jews, he'd been teaching people: "Keep the commandments."

Now, the interesting thing is, when we read that, we think of the Ten Commandments; and Jesus is going to mention them. But to the Pharisees, it was the *hundreds* of commandments. And there was even a teaching that, realizing you couldn't *possibly* keep all of those things all of the time—you might not even *know* about all of them—but, if you could find the most important ones and major on *those*...you know, maybe when God sort of grades on a curve a little bit, that would be enough. So Jesus is going along with *his* thinking.

Now, don't *you* go thinking that Jesus was misleading the man, or that Jesus missed a golden opportunity for evangelism. Realize: *Jesus knew the man's heart*, so think about what Jesus was doing—He was making this man realize that his whole spiritual merit system was flawed. He was trying to make him realize that, he was on a spiritual treadmill to nowhere. He was making him realize that he didn't need just *one more thing* to round out his already impressive spiritual résumé—the *one thing* that he could do that would put him over the top. He was trying to make him face the fact that he was a sinner, which was the fundamental point that this guy *didn't* grasp. The man was perplexed when he took the bait of what Jesus said, and then responded to Him.

In Verse 19, Jesus goes on: "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.'" Now, again, if we add in what Matthew says, Matthew includes the tidbit that, when Jesus said, "Keep the commandments," the man said to Him, "Which ones?" And remember—in his view, there were *hundreds*. This guy had memorized commandments—Biblical and extra-Biblical—since he was a child. He did everything that his Pharisee mentors had required of him. Why, he had even distinguished himself to the point that, he had risen to leadership in his synagogue as a *young man*, and that was quite the feather in the spiritual cap. Yet here he stands, realizing: he has *no confidence* that he will ever taste eternal life!

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He is standing there before the Son of God as the shining testimony to the futility of legalism! He had worked his way up the ladder of pseudo-spirituality to the top few rungs, and he *still* doesn't have a clue what to do. So he says, "Which ones?" It's kind of a pathetic question. He *should have* been crying out, "Be merciful to me, the sinner!"—like the tax collector in Luke (18:13). Instead, he's continuing his quest to find that *one last button* to push by his own fleshly efforts, in order to be good enough for God to like him well enough to grant him entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

Now, Jesus's answer this time is nearly as enigmatic as His first response. *This* time, when the guy said, "Which commandments?", Jesus included five of the last six of the Ten Commandments; and from Matthew, we know that Jesus included what is regarded as the "Second Great Commandment." The "First Great Commandment," as it's described in the gospels, summarizes the first four of the Ten Commandments; that's the words: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Matt. 22:37; cf. Deut. 6:5)—that's what the first four commandments are about. The "Second Great Commandment" is the summary of the last six of the Ten Commandments: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:39; cf. Lev. 19:18).

So it's interesting: Jesus quotes five of the last six of the Big Ten. But there's something remarkable and rather ingenious here that's pretty easy to miss. Which of the final six of the Ten Commandments did Jesus omit? I probably shouldn't have asked you that, because I'm going to lose you for the next five minutes while you try to remember the Ten Commandments—but I'll answer for you, okay? The one Jesus didn't mention is the 10th Commandment, which is Exodus Chapter 20, Verse 17—"You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor." That's significant, and let me show you why. Go back to the encounter between the rich young ruler and Jesus: Mark 10, Verse 20—"And he said to Him, 'Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth up.' " Ooooh—that's not a good thing to say to Jesus!

Now, again, there's a little more in Matthew that helps us know how this guy was thinking: Matthew 19:20—"The young man said to Him, 'All these things I have kept; what am I still lacking?' " He *reeks* of spiritual pride; he regards himself as a superior commandment-keeper! "I just want that *one last thing* to put me over the top!" Now, obviously, this guy wasn't around for the Sermon on the Mount; or, if he *was* around for the Sermon on the Mount, he sure didn't get it. He was thinking, "I haven't murdered anyone!" But he didn't understand, or he wouldn't admit, that anger is the same essential sin as murder—it's just a matter of how far down the road you go in acting on it. He hadn't cheated on his wife. But he didn't understand, or he wouldn't admit, that, that lascivious second look based upon the evil desire in the heart—even though it can be very well camouflaged—that's the same sin as adultery! You just haven't gone as far down the road in acting upon it. He hadn't stolen things. But as a wealthy man, he either didn't understand, or he wouldn't admit, that, failing to use his possessions for the glory of God *wisely*, and to help others, was *like* stealing from God. Surely, he was not blatantly telling lies. But he didn't understand, or he wouldn't admit, that his *own heart* was "deceitful" and "desperately wicked" (Jer. 17:9), and even *he* didn't know the depths of his own sin.

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He probably hadn't shamed his parents. Why, to be a young leader in the synagogue—he was probably their pride and joy! But he didn't understand, or he wouldn't admit, that a grumbling attitude of obedience is just as wicked as rebellion—it's just not acted out all the way. He proved he was clueless about his sin. If he could stand there and look Jesus in the eye and say he had always loved his neighbor as himself—the moment he said that, he revealed his guilt about bearing false witness, because he was lying! He can't perfectly keep those commandments! (see 1 Kings 8:46; Ps. 143:2; Ecc. 7:20)

Now, can you see why it's significant that Jesus held back the 10th Commandment? The man was asking the question, "What am I still lacking?" And Jesus *knew* that the guy didn't get it when he said, "All these things I have kept," but Jesus *also* knew that, the greatest sin that kept *this* man in bondage was his attachment to the worldly things that he processed, and the fact that he obviously always coveted more (see Ecc. 5:10). The guy missed the whole point. He's a great example of how effectively Satan can hijack Scripture. He can take the very Law of Moses and twist it.

Do you understand that, never once, not for a *moment*, was the Law—the Old Testament Law, the Mosaic Law—it was *never* meant to be the way for a person to climb the ladder of spiritual success until he achieves eternal life? That was *never* the purpose of the Law! The Law was given to reveal our sin, to drive us to our knees because we would know we need a Savior (see Rom. 3:20; Gal. 3:24)! That's "why the law" (Gal. 3:19). The Law of Moses was given *after* Israel was already chosen; it was given *after* Israel was redeemed, *after* Israel was given their miraculous deliverance from Egypt, *after* they were given miraculous food and water in the wilderness, *after* Israel was led to safety by God, *after* they were saved from death at the hand of Pharaoh, *after* they were promised the land as a gift from God. The Law was always designed by God to *show* Israel how to live by faith, having been saved by His grace—which He had sovereignly bestowed upon them. The Law was to be the means of God blessing His people when He gave them the land that He promised. Keeping the Law was the way to demonstrate their understanding of God's goodness, and to worship Him from a pure heart.

So Jesus zeroed in, in His answer to this guy, on *his* heart. Not only did this man own "much property," but that property owned *him*—that's what Jesus is getting at. So look at Mark 10, Verse 21—"Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him"—He always did; His heart was broken by the people who were rejecting what they should have known (see Lk. 19:41-42). He felt sorry for them; and they were under the *burden* of this impossible load of trying to be good enough (Matt. 23:4; cf. Acts 15:10). "Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, 'One thing you lack.' " I can see the man's face glowing: "Okay! He's going to give it to me! This is the *one more thing*; I'll just add *this one* to my résumé, and *I'm in!*" "One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

Now, how many of you repented when somebody said, "What you need to do is, go sell everything you have"? I don't think you got that message, did you? I mean, why didn't Jesus just give the guy the "Four Spiritual Laws" and be done with it? He's dealing with *this* man's heart, *this* man's sin.

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Is this passage contradicting what the Bible says about being saved by grace through faith? No! Is this passage contrary to everything else the Bible teaches about salvation, by saying you have to give away everything you own? No. But this isn't the end of the story! It unmasked *this* man for all to see, so that we could look at the rest of this story. The man's key question was, "What am I still lacking?" He was all wound up in himself—"I know I'm just *one thing* short!"—instead of saying, "How can a sinner like *me* ever enter the presence of a holy God?" He was lacking the willingness to make Jesus Christ his Lord. He was truly more attached to his earthly possessions than he was motivated to possess eternal riches.

So the punch line for this guy is the same as it is for you and me and anybody else we talk to about Christ today: Are you willing to follow Jesus Christ? Do you desire to love God with all your heart, all your mind, all your soul, and love your neighbor as yourself? Are you willing, if need be, to part with *things* in order to let God use you for His glory, to be a blessing to other people that He desires to bless?

It's true, Jesus answered this man differently than He answered most. But don't think that Jesus "blew" this evangelistic encounter. This man did not pass on to eternity apart from God because Jesus was insensitive to him and Jesus, on this one day, didn't get the gospel quite right. For all we know—and I like to think that this is how it worked out—maybe this man was one of the ones who believed on the day of Pentecost. Maybe he was among those 3,000 who repented.

The Bible doesn't say what became of him, but it does tell you a lot more, in the aftermath of this encounter with Jesus, about what we need to learn from it. And it leads to the next, and absolutely *vital*, question. "One thing you lack," He says. But then, the important question: Then who can be saved? This is how far we'll get this morning, through Verse 27. Verse 22 of Mark 10—"But at these words he was saddened, and he went away grieving, for he was one who owned much property." You see, Jesus knew that his property owned him as much as he owned his property, and He said, "One thing you lack. You're still tied to the world—cut that tie, and follow Me!" That wasn't what the guy wanted to hear—not at all. That property that he possessed held the key to the lock that kept the chains around his soul.

Verse 23—"And Jesus, looking around"—now, this is interesting; He's talking to this guy, but *now*, knowing other people are listening, He looks around to say to *everybody*—"Jesus, looking around, said to His disciples, 'How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!' " Again, it helps to compare Matthew and Mark and Luke, and we learn that when Jesus told him to give away his possessions and give to the poor and follow Him, we're told that the man's face fell; grief just flooded over him.

We also learn, as you compare the three gospel records of this incident, that when Jesus made the comment about how hard it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven, He said that before the guy was gone—it wasn't after he walked away. So since He said it to the man—He said it with the man present—He also looked around as He said it; it was a comment intended for the rich young ruler *and* a comment intended for the disciples *and* a comment intended for everyone else within earshot *and* it's for all of us who read the gospels!

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Now the man trudges away. I bet it was pretty quiet; I think probably, everyone was kind of aghast at what Jesus said to him. All their lives, they had been taught—in that hypocritical works-righteousness system of the Pharisees—they had been taught that the rich, since they could do so much more than others, *surely* the rich ones had the inside track to heaven, because it was a merit system! The words must have hung like icicles in the air as the man walked away. "Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven."

So as those words sunk in, and the silence was deafening, Jesus's voice rings out and strikes another blow against the lousy theology of the Pharisees and all of their followers; look at Verses 24 and 25—"The disciples were amazed at His words." Now remember, they're still in a growth process; there are still a lot of things that they haven't seen. Why would they be amazed that He said that? Well, because *they, too*, had been steeped in that system. "But Jesus answered again and said to them, 'Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.' "

Now, perhaps you've heard that explained before in terms that: when there was a walled city in the ancient world, the main gates to the city would be closed at night so that thieves and robbers couldn't come in—you couldn't be attacked at night; but there would be a smaller gate that someone could walk through—you'd just need one or two guards and you could guard that smaller gate; and that smaller gate was called "the Eye of the Needle," and if somebody came in with a camel and had to come in after dark, it was very hard to get through that gate, so they'd have to strip the camel of whatever it was carrying and the camel have to get on its knees and wriggle through the "Eye of the Needle" to get into the city. Have you ever heard that explanation? It's total bunk! I've heard it preached with *power and authority*—and it's wrong! Somebody made that up!

Let me give you a hint into the Greek here: "the eye of a needle" means "the eye of a needle"; "camel" means "camel"! How hard is it to get a camel through the eye of a needle? It is *impossible*—even if you grease the camel *really good*! You can't do it! The point is: *it is impossible*! "Easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle" was a colloquialism in that culture for "the impossible"! The Persians didn't have as many camels around, so they said, "It's easier for an *elephant* to go through the eye of a needle." There weren't any elephants in Palestine, so the Jewish version substitutes camel for elephant. The point is: it's impossible! This text says it's *impossible* for a rich person to be saved. And you know what? It's impossible for *anyone* to be saved—*that's* the point!

Now, the disciples took the bait, and they ask the next great question—that I've used as the title of the sermon: "They were even more astonished and said to Him, 'Then who can be saved?' " That sets the stage for the first payoff of this encounter with the rich young ruler. How *can* a rich man be saved? How can a *poor* man be saved? How can *anyone* be saved? *That's* what you're supposed to ask! *How can I be saved?* How is this possible? Well, it doesn't get any *better*—not yet! Verse 27—"Looking at them, Jesus said, 'With people'—literally, the Greek says "with man"—"it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God.' "

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What's the point here? "How can I be saved? What good thing can I do to be saved? What do I lack?" You lack absolutely everything! You don't have a chance! Your *only* hope is that God would *save you!* Oh, and the great news is: He did! He sent His Son to take the penalty (see Jn. 3:16; cf. Is. 53:5-11). A rich man can't save himself—he can't buy his way into heaven (see Prov. 11:4; cf. Ps. 49:7-9). No one can gain enough merit to earn the pleasure and the forgiveness of God. Salvation for everyone—man, woman, boy, girl, no matter what color, no matter what culture, no matter what language, no matter where, no matter when, no matter how many sins, no matter how much righteousness has been demonstrated on man's level—no one can be saved; it is *impossible!*

Now, comparing—on a human level—riches can be a *formidable* barrier that keeps some people from realizing their sin and humbling themselves (Prov. 11:28; 18:11), and that's why—to the rich young ruler—Jesus gave the answer that He gave. Now, riches—they can't buy salvation. They can be handy! Riches can buy church buildings, they can support missionaries and preachers, they can help the poor. But riches cannot buy or rent you *even a fleeting moment* in the presence of God. The only hope of salvation that that rich young ruler had is the only hope of salvation that *you and I have*, and that is that God will do it. And as I said, the great news is: He did it! Ephesians 2:8-9—to those who believed, he says: "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast." The grace of God is *truly* amazing! No wonder we keep singing that song!

The first key question comes from the lips of the rich young ruler: "What am I still lacking?" Ultimately, what he was lacking was the understanding that he was lacking *everything*; he didn't understand his own sinfulness. The second key question comes from the disciples when they heard how hard it is for a rich man to be saved: "Well, then, *who can be saved?*" Only one who will receive it, through childlike faith, as a free gift of God that only He can accomplish (see Rom. 6:23).

Now, reset the scene in your mind: The rich young ruler has gone away, devastated; he's grieved. He wouldn't admit his sin, he wouldn't humble himself and realize that, nothing in this world is as important as knowing God and being with Him for eternity (see Matt. 16:26). And now, the disciples are saying, "Wow! It's that hard? Who? *Who's* going to get in?" Well, come back next time, and we're going to see the further application that Jesus makes in light of this encounter. Oh, and there's something else *really rich* from this. But we're not in Russian—we're going to stop without having a three hour service this morning. So we'll continue next Lord's Day. Let's pray:

Father, thank You for this portion of Your Word. Thank You for all of Your Word, but for this lesson—remind us: not by any of our merits can we stand in Your presence, but only by Your grace. You know every heart here this morning, just as well as You knew the heart of that rich young man. You know every need of every heart. So may Your Spirit have His way with us, to mold us and shape as You would have it to be, that we can give You glory forever. Put the message of salvation—which is impossible for man—upon our lips, and send us out to proclaim it, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.