



The Reverend Dr. David V. Silvernail, Jr.
Mark 10:17-31

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English Standard Version

“Questions and Answers”
The 31st Sermon in a series on The Gospel of Mark entitled
“The King and His Cross”

Welcome to Potomac Hills. I’m glad you’ve found us on our YouTube Channel. We’ve been working through the Gospel of Mark and this is our 31st week in this amazing gospel. The Gospel of Mark was written by a man named John Mark, a follower of Christ and a protégé of the Apostle Peter. He brings us the earliest eyewitness accounts of the life of Christ. So, I’m glad you’ve joined us this morning and I hope you find it worthwhile. Before I start, please turn in your Bibles to **The Gospel of Mark, chapter 10**, and listen carefully as I read our Scripture passage for today.

Mark 10:17-31

“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.

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.”

***The Word of the Lord
Thanks be to God
Let's pray ...***

Heavenly Father, this is Your Word and we need it. Thank You for giving us the Scriptures and making us Your people. You have brought us to this amazing Gospel to learn more about your Son, Jesus. We ask You this morning to give us the grace to understand. It's hard to admit that we don't have it all together; that we're not nearly as obedient as we like to think; and that we treasure our stuff more than we treasure You. So help us to consider what it means to follow Christ and to hear Your Word. Help us to hear it, understand it, believe it, and obey it. And so we pray, speak through the Gospel of Mark this morning, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, help us see Jesus, for in His name we pray, amen ... and amen.

INTRODUCTION: “He Lives in Loudoun County” ¹

More than one in five Americans say religion does not play an important role in their lives, a NBC/Wall Street Journal poll showed – the highest percentage since the poll began asking participants about their faith. 23% said religion is “**not that important**” to their lives, up from 21% in 2014, and 14% in 1997. The poll showed that these **less religious** Americans are more likely to be **men**, have an income **over \$75,000**, to live in the Northeast (the Washington – New York – Boston corridor, to be specific) or the West, and to be **under the age of 35**.

You know this guy — He lives **here**. Forbes Magazine says so. As most of you know, Loudoun County is **the wealthiest county** in the wealthiest country in the history of the world. We live in the suburbs of Washington, DC —universally regarded as the most **powerful** city in the world. **Young** people work on congressional staffs helping to make decisions that affect millions of people. And the money flows so freely **you can smell it**. The Washington area is a place where people come to **make money**, it's a place where people come to **do stuff**, it's a place where people come to either **exercise power** or learn how to exercise power. And it attracts certain types of people.

1 The Introduction is adapted from the articles, “Losing Faith: 21 Percent Say Religion 'Not That Important' by Carrie Dann, 3/13/14, www.NBCNews.com and “America’s Richest Counties” by Tom Van Riper, 4/25/13, www.forbes.com; and the book The Applause of Heaven by Max Lucado, pages 26–27.

And they live all around us. Think about this “average” guy ... wealthy, young, powerful, smart, active, and, for the most part ... single. He’s rich. Nice shoes. Tailored suit. His money is invested. His plastic is golden. He lives like he flies — first class. He’s young. He pumps away fatigue at the gym and slam-dunks old age on the court. His belly is flat, his eyes are sharp. Energy is his trademark, and death is an eternity away. He’s powerful. If you don’t think so, just ask him. You got questions? He’s got answers. You got problems? He’s got solutions. You got dilemmas? He’s got opinions. He knows where he’s going, and he’ll be there tomorrow. He’s the next generation. So old guys like me had better pick up the pace or pack their bags. He has mastered the three “Ps” of the Millennials — Prosperity ... Performance ... and Power.

He’s the **Rich ... Young ... Ruler**.

Now, for the sake of an interesting introduction, I’ve probably made him sound a lot worse than he really is. More than likely, he would have been considered a pretty good guy, both then and now. After all, Jesus tells us that he was rich in more ways than one. He was financially wealthy ... and he was **morally** wealthy. What does that mean? Well, first of all, it appears that he’s a decent person, a person **characterized** by **moral excellence**. When Jesus actually lists many of the Ten Commandments ... do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not bear false witness, honor your father and mother, love your neighbor as yourself ... he says, “Bingo! I do all that.”

Let’s **assume** he’s telling the **truth**, and that anyone who knew him would say, “Yes, here is a man characterized by **moral excellence**. Here is a man who’s characterized by sexual purity. He’s a loving son. He’s a great citizen. He’s a man of integrity and honesty.” Let’s **assume** that all of that is **true**. Not only that, we’re told he was wealthy, **Mark 10:22**, “*He had great possessions.*”

Back then, as well as now, there’s kind of an unconscious feeling that those two things go together ... that if you **do good** – then you’ll do well ... and if you’ve **done well** – it’s because you did good. Remember when Maria, the main character in *The Sound of Music*, is about to marry a rich guy ... She **realizes** she’s going to marry a rich guy, so she sings a song. She says, “Somewhere in my youth or childhood, I must have done something good.” What’s she saying? “I must be a pretty good person or God wouldn’t be rewarding me like this.”

Of course, this is the reverse of what Job’s friends said. When Job fell into poverty and disease, they essentially said, “Somewhere in your youth or childhood, you must have done something **bad**. There must be something **wrong**.” There’s a feeling, it’s kind of hard to describe, and nobody wants to articulate it, that if you live a good life, then God will reward you by giving you a certain amount of prosperity. So, in a sense, you’re characterized by moral excellence, and obviously you’re being rewarded by God by being given a prosperous life. Now, we regularly put down ... “the prosperity gospel” as a **false gospel**. But inside, well, we really want God to “**bless us**” with lots of **stuff**.

So we like this guy. He reminds us of us. And as he approaches Jesus, it seems like here’s the ideal person that any church leader would say, “This is the kind of guy I’m looking for. This is a person I want.” Not only is he characterized by **moral excellence**, a man whose life is very together in all sorts of ways, but **he’s even willing to admit there’s something he lacks**. Think about it. From a pastoral standpoint, it’s great to have a rich person willing to come to church and say, “I’m still missing something.” This guy has got it together even in

terms of honest humility. So much so that he can admit, “I don’t really have it all together. Hard to believe, but I still lack something.”

Now, before we go any farther, we have to stop and ask, “**Why is this event happening at this point in the story?**” In **Mark 10**, the Lord Jesus is teaching us about the nature of the Kingdom ... the character of the Kingdom that He is ushering in. He focuses especially on three subjects: marriage, children, and possessions. Two weeks ago we considered Jesus’ strong words about marriage and divorce and remarriage. Last week, we considered Jesus’ words about children ... and how their trust, humility, and love are examples for **adults** who want to enter the Kingdom of God. We are to become like a child.

Remember what’s going on here. Jesus was continuing His journey toward Jerusalem. He’s engaging the disciples in teaching about what it means to follow Him and His forthcoming crucifixion and resurrection. But they have trouble grasping what He’s saying. Jesus has **just told them** that they must enter the kingdom of God like a little child. Everyone has come to Jesus with nothing, in **helpless dependence** on Him. No one can earn the kingdom. The requirement is the same for all: simple, childlike trust in Jesus. It’s that easy. It’s in this context that we see one who’s the opposite of a child approaching Jesus. And so, turn with me to our passage for today, **Mark 10**, starting at **verse 17**, where see that ...

v. 17–22: IT’S EASIER THAN YOU THINK ²

“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.”

Who am I? **Why** am I here? **What** is my purpose in living? **Where** will I go when I die? **How** will I get there? These are what we refer to as “**the ultimate questions**” of life. Everyone thinks about them. These questions go to the heart of what it means to be human. They address our **significance, importance, and destiny**. And think about this ... the questions are connected. How you answer one will influence how you answer the others.

2 The Exposition of the text is adapted from my sermons, “Is it Worth it?” 11/15/98, “What Jesus said to a Rich Man” 9/22/02, and “Difficulty in the Kingdom” 3/16/14, all preached here at Potomac Hills. And the books, especially Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary – Exalting Jesus in Mark by Dr. Daniel Akin, pages 217-225. And also Jesus the King: Understanding the Life and Death of the Son of God (previously published as The King’s Cross: The Story of the World in the Life of Jesus), by Dr. Tim Keller, pages 134–140; The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Gospel according to Mark by Dr. James Edwards, pages 309-317. And the sermons, “Greed: The Case of the Rich Young Ruler” 3/19/95, “Camels, Needles, and Riches” 6/3/92, “Camels and Money” 8/27/00, “Generosity and Wealth” 10/28/12, and “The Grace of Generosity” 12/5/6/15, all by Dr. Tim Keller, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, NY, The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive, Logos Bible Software 8.13; “The Impossibility of Salvation” 1/10/99 and “The Poor Man (Who Thought He Was Rich)” 4/10/11, both by Dr. J. Ligon Duncan, Chancellor, Reformed Theological Seminary, and “Jesus and the Materialist” by Dr. David Strain, Senior Minister, First Presbyterian Church (PCA), Jackson, MS, 10/5/14, www.fpcjackson.org.

One day a respected man in the community came to Jesus. He was specifically interested in **his destiny**, verse 17, *“What must I do to inherit eternal life?”* In the process of answering that question, Jesus teaches him about what matters most in life. He teaches him that **what** you decide now will determine **where** you go later. The questions connect ... so do the answers. This text addresses the important question ... Who or what should have **first place in my life**? Jesus **demand**s that people **give Him first place** in their lives above all else and all others. As the Apostle Paul wrote in **Colossians 1:18**, *“And He [Christ] is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything He might be preeminent.”* This account of the **rich young ruler** raises the question ... Can and will someone of great wealth and standing receive the kingdom like a little child? There’s a lot more here than meets the eye, so let’s see how Jesus addresses this question, *“What must I do to inherit eternal life?”*

Well, first of all, you have to ...

- **v. 17: Go to the Right Person**

A man ran up to Jesus. He had great wealth, verse 22, *“great possessions.”* **Luke 18:18** calls him a **ruler**. **Matthew 19:22** says he’s **young**. Thus we call him *“the rich young ruler.”* He was a man of power, affluence, and influence. Evidently, he’d heard Jesus teach and was impressed with what he heard. He didn’t walk to Jesus; he **ran** to Him. He was eager because Jesus *“was setting out on His journey.”* He may not get another opportunity to talk to this man whose teachings were unlike any he’d ever heard. With remarkable respect he *“knelt before Him.”* He saw Jesus as a distinguished rabbi and paid Him an honor reserved for the great teachers of the law. He’d certainly come in the right way (with humility) and to the right person (Jesus).

And Jesus will readily identify with the **rich young ruler**. After all, He was about 30 years old Himself. And He, too, was rich — far richer than this man could ever imagine. As the Son of God, Jesus had lived for eternity in the glory, wealth, love, and fellowship of His Father. What He was about to ask this man to do was not unfamiliar to Him! He had already left it all behind. Paul says it well in **2 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.”* About this, Tim Keller writes, *“And [Jesus would say] I am going into a poverty deeper than anyone has ever known. ... I am giving it all away. Why? For you. Now, [get ready, I am going to ask] you [to] give away everything to follow Me. If I gave away my ‘big all’ to get you, can you give away your ‘little all’ to follow me? I won’t ask you to do anything I haven’t done already. I’m the ultimate Rich Young Ruler who has given away the ultimate wealth to get you. Now, you need to give away your wealth to get me.”* Jesus is the right person. So first you go to the right person, but then you have to ...

- **v. 17: Ask the Right Question**

This man then calls Jesus **good**, *“Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”* This was an astounding tribute indicating the impression Jesus had made on him. The Jews referred to God as good but never spoke this way of one another except in a qualified sense. Only God is good in the absolute sense of the word. Jesus’ response in **verse 18** bears this out. The **rich young ruler** was awed by Jesus, and he had an important question to ask Him. This question is one of the most significant questions of all — How do I get eternal life? In the Bible the gift of eternal life is called entering the kingdom of God, having treasure in heaven, and enjoying the age to come. It’s the life *of* God and life *with* God. It’s the privilege of being a

member of God's kingdom, and it must be received with faith in Jesus and the reliance of a little child. We don't know whether the **rich young ruler** had heard Jesus say this or not. His question, by no means a bad one, implies he believes eternal life is something **you work for** ... ***“What must I DO?”***

All the religions of the world can be categorized under “do” or “done.” I am saved by what I **do** or by what another has **done**. Christianity is a **done** religion. Eternal life is not achieved; it is received as a gift based on what Jesus has **done** for us. So the **rich young ruler** must have both a change of theology ... and a change of heart ... if he is to inherit eternal life. Having gone to the right person and asked the right question, he now has to make sure that he ...

- **v. 18-21: Gets the Right Answer**

Jesus answers the **rich young ruler's** question with another question, a theological question ... ***“Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.”*** Jesus does not return the **rich young ruler's** flattering greeting as might have been expected. Jesus puts the focus of where it should be ... on God. The **rich young ruler's** starting point was wrong because it was himself – ***“What must I do?”*** The **rich young ruler** was no doubt a “good man” by the standards of his day. He saw in Jesus **another good man** whose insight into spiritual matters could perhaps solve some of the lingering questions that plagued his soul.

However, Jesus forced him to look to God for any hope of genuine goodness and eternal life. Furthermore, Jesus implicitly confronted the **rich young ruler** with his evaluation of Jesus. To call Him good is to call Him God. Is that what he meant? If Jesus is not God, then He, like the rest of humanity, is a sinner and therefore not good in the supreme sense. On the other hand, if He **is** God, it would be appropriate to call Him good. It would also be appropriate to **worship** Him, **follow** Him, and **obey** Him. He challenges the **rich young ruler** to think clearly and choose his words carefully, a challenge each of us would be wise to consider.

Jesus doesn't wait for a response. ***“You know the commandments”*** and then cites the last six commandments, which address our relationships with one another. The **rich young ruler** wanted to know, ***“What must I do to inherit eternal life?”*** Jesus says, “I'll tell you what you must do: obey the will of God, which is revealed in His perfect, holy, and moral law. Obey this in the **good** sense (that is, perfect) — in the same way that God is **good** — and eternal life is yours.”

The **rich young ruler** responds, ***“Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth.”*** The **rich young ruler** had conducted his life according to the law of God. He had honored and obeyed it all! In an external sense, what he said was probably true. Like the apostle Paul he was faultless with respect to the outward demands of the law as taught by the religious teachers of Israel. He had worked for God's approval and his record was spotless! **Verse 21** is one of the most touching and tender verses in the Bible, just as **verse 22** is one of the most tragic. **Verse 21**, ***“And Jesus, looking at him, loved him ...”*** There was a sincerity and earnestness about this **rich young ruler** that moved the heart of our Lord. His heart reached out to him because this man was so close to the kingdom. Jesus ***“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.”***

Having addressed the last six commandments, Jesus now addresses the first. God must be God in our lives. No one and nothing can stand between Him and us. The particular demand Jesus puts on the **rich young ruler** is not a general command for all persons. It was specific to him, though it could be specific to some of us too! His wealth occupied the place that only God

should have in his life. It was his idol, his god. He may have obeyed, relatively speaking, those commands that address human relationships, but he lived in perpetual disobedience when it came to the first and fundamental commandment, **Exodus 20:3**, “*You shall have no other gods before Me.*”

Jesus is saying, You come up short in your life in one crucial area — what will be first? Jesus offers Himself as a substitute for the man’s wealth. Only when he gives it all away will he become like a child. Only then will he actually **possess** everything! The call to discipleship is a call to radical trust in Christ. Jesus challenges all of us to put away anything that’s an obstacle to following Him. You cannot love your wealth **supremely** and love Jesus **supremely**. As Jesus Himself said in **Matthew 6:24**, “*No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.*” So now, he’s gone to the right person, he’s asked the right question, He got the right answer, but he now has to ...

- **v. 22: Give the Right Response**

Verse 22 records the tragic end of their encounter, “*Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.*” Sorrow and sadness moved in. “*He went away sorrowful.*” Some versions say “*grieving.*” Why? “*for he had great possessions.*” His gold would remain his god. Jesus’ difficult demand was met with a “no.” He got the right answer to his question. He just didn’t give the right response. One commentator notes, “A person who leads an exemplary life — who even endears himself to the Son of God — can still be an idolater.” Well, in the end, for the rich young ruler, it didn’t seem easier than you think at all. In fact, it felt like ...

v. 23–27: IT’S HARDER THAN YOU THINK

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.”*

The **rich young ruler** had come to the right person: Jesus. He had asked the right question: How do I inherit eternal life? He had received the right answer: Honor God and follow Jesus in complete trust like a little child. Sadly, he didn’t give the right response, and he walked away from the only true source of eternal life. Again, Tim Keller explains, “When Jesus called this **rich young ruler** 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.” Jesus told His disciples, “*How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!*” Jesus was not condemning wealth and commending poverty. The point is, wealth breeds confidence in self, and it has an addictive quality. Scripture addresses its dangerous attraction repeatedly. It becomes the priority and the things of God go by the wayside.

The disciples couldn’t believe it! So Jesus emphasized it even more, starting at **verse 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.” Jesus called them a term He had just given great value to — **“Children.”** The camel was one of the largest animals found in that part of the world. The thought of trying to squeeze it through the eye of a needle would strike His disciples as both funny ... and impossible. And to paraphrase, they essentially said, “Perhaps salvation is harder than we thought.” And it only takes one thing - like wealth – to keep you out of God’s kingdom. And they didn’t see that coming. Jesus turns the value system of the world on its head.

The Twelve **“were exceedingly astonished.”** They asked, **“Then who can be saved?”** Judaism was guilty of its own “prosperity theology.” Wealth and riches were seen as an evidence of God’s favor. Jesus corrected that. Actually, wealth can build a barrier to the one thing necessary to enter the kingdom: helpless, childlike trust in Jesus. His answer to their question is one of the great theological affirmations in the Bible, **verse 27, “With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God.”** Salvation is something no one can accomplish by themselves. Left to ourselves, we will never make it into God’s kingdom and inherit eternal life. Salvation **is**, has always **been**, and will always **be** a divine accomplishment through the perfect atonement and sacrificial death of God’s Son. **Done ... not do!**

With people, entering God’s kingdom and receiving eternal life is impossible, and no one will be saved. However, with God **all things are possible**, and **anyone can be saved!** If you desire for Christ to be your Savior, you have to replace what you have been looking to as a savior. We all have something. What’s yours? Jesus said to the **rich young ruler**, “I want you to imagine life without money. All you have is Me. **Am I enough?**” Do you truly believe the person who has Jesus plus nothing actually has everything? That’s the question Jesus puts before him. It’s the same question He puts before us.

Well, entering the Kingdom of God is both easier than you think ... and harder than you think. But Jesus says it’s worth it, because ...

v. 28–31: IT’S BETTER THAN YOU THINK ³

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.”*

We could suspect that the disciples would have lots of questions. They needed to think things over. Peter expresses a perplexed but heartfelt plea. Peter, the ever-ready spokesman for the disciples, picks up on the words of Jesus and says, **“See, we have left everything and followed You.”** Jesus affirms that whatever you might give up in this present life for **“My sake and the gospel,”** you will not fail to receive a hundred times as much **“now in this time ... and in the age to come eternal life.”** The things Jesus notes we may have to give up are precious things ... **“houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands.”** It **costs** to follow Jesus. However, the blessings far outweigh the losses. In God’s kingdom the blessings are simply too great to imagine.

³ John Piper quote comes from his book Let the Nations Be Glad! The Supremacy of God in Missions.

One surprising blessing is “*persecutions.*” Its inclusion strikes a sobering note of realism for the person who would follow Jesus. To be a member of Christ’s kingdom means to share in all that is His. This includes suffering on His behalf. When seen against the promise of eternal life, the Apostle Paul addresses trials and tribulations in **2 Corinthians 4:17**, “*For this **light momentary affliction** is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.*”

John Piper specifically applies these verses to us, “It means mainly that if you are deprived of your earthly family in the service of Christ, it will be made up a hundredfold in your spiritual family, the church. But even this may be too limiting. What about the lonely missionaries who labor for years without being surrounded by hundreds of sisters and brothers and mothers and children in the faith? Is the promise not true for them? Surely it is. Surely what Christ means is that **He Himself makes up for every loss**. If you give up a mother’s affection and concern, you get back one hundred times the affection and concern from the ever-present Christ. If you give up the warm camaraderie of a brother, you get back one hundred times the warmth and camaraderie from Christ. If you give up the sense of at-homeness you had in your house, you get back one hundred times the comfort and security of knowing that your Lord owns every house and land and stream and tree on earth.” Isn’t that what Jesus is saying?

He finishes with a now familiar saying. “*But many who are first will be last, and the last first*” is one of those sayings Jesus probably repeated on several occasions. In Christ’s Kingdom there is a grand reversal of every earthly standard of position, rank, and importance. God does not evaluate things in the same way we do. As citizens of His Kingdom, His children should think more like Him than like the world. To the general public, the **rich young ruler** stood first and the children stood last. But God saw things from the perspective of eternity — and the first become last while the last become first. Those who are first in their own eyes will be last in God’s eyes, but those who are last in their own eyes will be rewarded as first! Tim Keller says, “The heart of the gospel is all about giving up power, pouring out resources and serving ... the center of Christianity is always migrating away from power and wealth.”

Remember ... this passage comes right after Jesus’ encounter with the children, and surely the **rich young ruler** is set in deliberate contrast. He was strong, while the children were **weak**. He was self-reliant, while they were **dependent**. He turned away from the Lord in frustration, while the children **rested** peacefully in the Savior’s arms. It is an effective contrast; a contrast between self-reliant works and the dependent faith that receives the Kingdom of God **like a child**. And all God’s children said, “Amen.”

Think about that. You need to pray. Take a moment to do that, and then I’ll close.

Our Lord and our God, thank You that You have given us a King. In this passage, we see Your Son. Open our eyes that we might see our sin and then see our Savior. We look at You and say, “Jesus, we came expecting a little additional help.” Now we see that you have to be our Prophet, our Priest, and King; You have to be our Alpha and Omega, our everything, and we ask that You would make it so. Give us the faith to leave our treasure behind, make You our treasure, and rejoice that You make us His treasure. And so, O Lord, if there is anyone among us this day, who comes here not trusting in Christ, we would ask that by Your Spirit that You would draw that person to Yourself — by grace alone — that they might embrace Christ the King. Help us to know and believe that the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever. Amen.

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1 Corinthians 1:26-30

*“For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. **And because of Him you are in Christ Jesus**, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption.”*