

**Follow Me - It's Worth It**  
**Mark 10:17-31**

Brothers and sisters, If I were to ask you, what just happened in the passage we read? I'm fairly certain that most people would say *"Jesus told some rich guy he had to sell everything he had in order to come and follow Him."* The more observant of us might want to add *"and give it all to the poor..."*

We likely notice this because we're a group of wealthy people – comparatively speaking with the rest of the world...

It's unlikely someone would say *"Jesus just told His disciples it's impossible to get into the Kingdom of heaven if you're rich."*

Though someone might... possibly because they're Marxist.

And I'm pretty sure none of us would say *"Jesus just promised His disciples they would get back more than what they gave up to follow him - with interest!"* Because the truth is – as we are mostly very well off, we are not in great need and... here in Canada we don't really have to give up anything to follow Jesus.

But the truth is brothers and sisters, this passage isn't about selling off all our possessions, its not about damming the rich because they are rich, and it's not about putting a price tag on how much it should cost you to follow Jesus.

What we ought to notice are Jesus words *"with man this is impossible... but with God – All things are possible!"*

Brothers and sisters this is a passage that is focused on salvation, and how that reality comes into our lives – but we get distracted by the money, the needles and camels, and worrying if we've paid the right price to follow Jesus.

So, let's clear away all that distraction and make sure that we're focused on the main point of this passage right from the start – if we want salvation... we'll need to follow Jesus. Let me state that again - If we want to receive salvation, we'll need to follow Jesus! Follow Me.

And over the past three Sundays, as Jesus says to us *"Follow Me!"* we've learned that it is a call to action; we become

fishers of men who pull people out of the net of the enemy...  
It is a call of grace and forgiveness which restores us to our original calling, stewards of God's creation who worship Him with every area of our lives...

And it is a call to something greater than just this life – and paradoxically that means we must deny ourselves and take up our cross as we follow Jesus.

Now, I'll be the first to admit that cross bearing and self-denial are not great motivators for me to follow Jesus. But I'm willing to travel His path through whatever may come - because I know it leads to the Kingdom of Heaven, and to eternal life. I'm willing to go through self-denial and the cross because the vision of what is yet to come is truly inspirational.

Revelation 21:2-4 the Apostle John describes *"I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband."*<sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, *"Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he*

*will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God."*<sup>4</sup> *"He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."*

And the Apostle Paul describes our amazing future transformation in 1 Cor 15:42-44, he says *"So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable;"*<sup>43</sup> *it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power;"*<sup>44</sup> *it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.*

So just in case you got stuck or distracted last Sunday with the issue of having to deny yourself and take up your cross, just as the disciples did, and you missed why we are willing to do this. I want to reiterate to you again this week, that because of what is yet to come – it is so worth it to follow Jesus. It is so worth it to follow Jesus!

There is nothing better you can do with your life brothers and sisters than to follow the Lord Jesus with all your heart, soul,

mind and strength. Follow Him through whatever may come all the way to the resurrection and the coming Kingdom!

Because... as Roman 8:18-19 proclaims *“our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.”*<sup>19</sup> *For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed.”* Amen?

So, now that our perspective is shifting from just focusing on this life – to anticipating the eternal life that is to come... and we’re also waiting in eager expectation... longing, yearning, dreaming about it... we also might start to worry about it.

Just as a young woman who dreams of finding Mr. Right and falling in love, getting married and starting a family might worry what would happen if she doesn’t find Mr. Right? Or a young man who has dreams of playing ball professionally worries what will happen if he gets injured or doesn’t play well enough to make the cut...

We also might start to worry about what would happen if we did not inherit this coming eternal life. We might start to wonder how we can be certain that we will have eternal life. How can we know for sure that we have a future in the new heavens and the new earth?

I wonder how many of us noticed that the man in our scripture passage, who ran and knelt before Jesus, to meet him before He left the area, had this very pressing concern? *“Good teacher... what must I do to inherit eternal life?”*

Brothers and sisters – have you come to this point where you have faced this question yet?

Do you so desire the life everlasting, the Kingdom of God, the new creation in all its amazing renewed glory and splendor, being face to face with Jesus – worshipping God with all the saints and the angels, seeing all that you love in this life purified of sin and pain and suffering?!!

So that you desire - more than anything else - to make sure... 100% sure... that this is where you end up?

Have you asked that question *“what must I do to inherit eternal life?”* If you have not – I pray this morning the Holy Spirit puts it into your spirit, and that you are pressed to seek an answer as this man did. *“Good Teacher....”*

Now this was an interesting way to approach Jesus, but it reveals this man believed Jesus to be someone who was a shoe-in for eternal life. Everything about Jesus exemplified what it meant to be a good Jew.

He was a man of righteous works who taught with authority, healed the sick, cast out evil spirits and blessed people. He followed Yahweh instead seeking political power or religious prestige.

Surely if anyone was going to receive eternal life at the resurrection it would be this good teacher! Who better to ask for some expert advice to make sure he was on the right track.

Maybe there’s someone like that for you as well – someone who you think is just super-spiritual, someone who has an in with God, someone who really exemplifies what you think it means to be a Christian and should be a shoe-in for heaven?

And when we start to look for something to assure us of eternal life, we might not run to them and say “Good Christian...” but we look to their example and we try to emulate how we see them being such dedicated followers of Christ – surely that would give an assurance our path of following Jesus will lead us to eternal life, because I’m doing what I think makes one a good Christian.

Brothers and sisters, if you are doing that – if you are trying to be a good Christian to find assurance that you are on the right path to eternal life, let me go Dr. Phil on you and ask... *“how’s that working out for you so far?”*

Are you confident in your own abilities to be a good Christian - or are you still wondering if you’re good enough to receive eternal life?

Ironically as this man in the passage see Jesus in the same way and believes can answer this question, he is both right and wrong at the same time. He's absolutely correct that Jesus is a shoe-in for eternal life and resurrection, but he's absolutely wrong in why he believes this to be true.

So, this is why Jesus replies *"why do you call me good? No one is good—except God alone!"*

He's also absolutely correct that Jesus can tell him what he needs to do, but he's absolutely wrong in what he expects this to be. Now I'm not exactly sure what he was looking for, but you get the sense he's kind of disappointed that Jesus' basically tells him to obey the 10 Commandments.

Jesus's response that *God alone is good*, summarizes the first four; worship only God, no idols, don't misuse His name, keep God's Day holy. Then Jesus lists the six others; *"do not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother..."*

The man responds *"I've been doing that since I was a boy!"* and the implication here is that he still feels like something is missing, that its not enough to be certain. So, Jesus diagnoses it for him, speaking the truth in love, He replies *"there is one thing that you are missing..."*

You can almost picture the anticipation in the man's face as he's about to learn the answer. *"well, there is one thing..."*  
Yes, yes, tell me, what is it – what do I need to do!?

Deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me! Or as this command for all who would follow Jesus is specifically applied to this man – *"go sell all you have and give to the poor and then come and follow me."*

If this man follows Jesus, He will have the certainty of eternal life in who Jesus is and what Jesus will do in Jerusalem – especially when Jesus is resurrected back to life. But, as Jesus qualified last week – if you want to follow Him to Jerusalem you will need to deny yourself and take up your cross.

But this man cannot do it – he has too much to lose, and he’s not really looking to follow Jesus, he’s just looking for Jesus’ affirmation of his own efforts, and so he leaves disappointed not having received what he was looking for.

It’s ironic how this man came to ask what he would be able to **do**... in order to be certain of eternal life – and Jesus is able to precisely identify the one thing that he actually **can’t do**!

Jesus’ gives him an impossible assignment so that he might come to realize that being certain of eternal life does not rest on our own efforts, or what we are capable of doing... but instead resides in Jesus himself, as God incarnate. *“Why do you call me good – only God alone is good!”*

Brothers and sisters, your certainty of eternal life is found only in God and in His goodness. The goodness expressed by the fact that He is willing to give you eternal life in spite of the fact that you do not deserve it, there is nothing you could ever do to earn it, or buy it...

And that’s the reason I say this passage isn’t about setting a precedent of giving away all our possessions as a mark of being Jesus’ followers. Because that would turn it into a work that we would hold on to and trust in for our certainty, just as this man would have if he had actually gone and done what Jesus told him to.

And we see Peter make this exact mistake, he blurts out *“we have given up everything to follow you!”* We’ve done the right thing to prove that we’re truly your disciples right Jesus!

Peter thinks Jesus is trying to make a point about people - rich people - not being able to part with their possessions as a qualifier for being saved. *“Who then can be saved”* the disciples ask Jesus... And Peter, like us, completely misses Jesus’ good news that *“with man [earning salvation and eternal life] is impossible but with God all things are possible!”*

So as I said earlier this whole passage is about salvation and how it comes into our lives and the main point is that if we want salvation and certainly of the eternal life that it brings

we need to follow Jesus – because as we will see, Jesus himself is the certainty of eternal life.

What Jesus wants to teach the disciples, and what Jesus wants us to understand this morning is that following Him means coming to see the impossibility of trying to earn our salvation, that we come to face the futility of finding certainty of it in our efforts or our own goodness...

Instead, we need to see that certainty in Him, in who He is, in what He Has done - and trust in that! Amen?

You see brothers and sisters, sometimes salvation finds us in desperate situations where we are already aware of the impossibility of our own efforts.

You hear this in the wonderful testimonies where people share how Jesus rescued them from addiction to drugs and alcohol, transformed them from a gangster and took them off the streets, changed them from a lifestyle of sexual

promiscuity or perversity, delivered them from demonic oppression and occult activity.

These people were not believers, they were under the power of sin, caught in the dragnet of the enemy, and the Lord used some fishers of men to pull them out of the net and bring salvation to them. Maybe that's your story?

Or perhaps it's a testimony like Levi the tax collector.

Someone who was raised in the faith wanted nothing to do with the faith – they turned away and betrayed their calling to serve the Lord. The rebellious teenager, the apathetic young adult, the disillusioned 30-something... but the Lord called them – brought them back, restored them with grace and forgiveness for their desertion.

That's my story – the rebellious teenager who God stopped in his tracks with a motorcycle accident, showing me the error of my ways and highlighting that if I had died in that accident, I did not have the certainty of where I would end up... so, it

was time I started following Jesus! maybe that's similar to your story as well.

But there's a lot of us who don't come into salvation that way. There are a lot of us who are born into Christian families and raised in the church, maybe went to a Christian school as well. We've never really went through a rebellious phase, never did anything really bad, always gone to church, read the bible, said our prayers, volunteered with the youth group, played in worship team, give to help the poor and homeless, and did the kinds of things that good Christians do.

We love God, we believe Jesus' death on the cross forgives our sins – such as they are, because nobody is perfect... We'll go to heaven when we die, and we have eternal life because Jesus rose from the dead and we believe this. That's just how it is. You've always believed that – since you were a kid.

Brothers and sisters, if this is your story – then you have a lot in common with the rich man in the scripture passage this morning.

And I'm praying that the Holy Spirit will take your mundane assumption of eternal life and turn it into an eager expectation, and give a burning desire to be 100% certain and confident that you yourself have everlasting life.

Not just a generic belief that good Christians go to heaven when they die, but a personal inner confidence that you know you will end up in the presence of Jesus, in the new creation, with a resurrection body for eternity!

But to get to that point brothers and sisters – the Lord is going to have to give you an impossibility, something that will bring you to the end of yourself, something that you can't do, something that will show you beyond a shadow of a doubt... that your own abilities, strength, and good works are not enough to inherit eternal life, and they are not why God is giving you eternal life.

Maybe the Holy Spirit is already doing this in your life? From my years of experience as a pastor a lot of times I see it happen when life circumstances and challenges become more



than we can handle... job losses, illnesses, mental health challenges, financial pressures, relationship breakdowns, the death of loved ones, the loss of hopes and dreams – these kinds of situations.

And we're like "why is this happening to me? Why is God allowing this? I'm praying and it's not getting any better!" and it begins to sap your strength and your energy and motivation and your faith.

You don't feel like praying anymore or reading your bible, going to church feels disingenuous because everyone seems happy and you're not. Plus, they don't seem to understand what you're going through, so you stop attending and being involved. But now you don't feel like you're being a very good Christian anymore, so you're starting to feel guilty - in addition to being stressed, worn out, and at the end of your rope.

And this is a critical point brothers and sisters. I've heard many people say at this point *"I just can't do this Christian thing anymore! Having faith and trusting God, being all happy and*

*joyful and finding answers and insight when you pray and read the bible, it's not working – look at my life right now! I can't do this..."*

Now this is a critical point brothers and sisters because it needs to be made clear to you in a very gentle, sensitive, pastoral way that you are up against an impossibility – and that a paradigm shift is happening for you – to you.

God's not punishing you for something... God's not trying to teach you a lesson, God is using these circumstances and experiences to exchange your efforts, your good works, the righteousness that comes from self for Christ's efforts, Christ's works and Christ's righteousness. God is doing a spiritual transfusion in you. You need to be able to see this, to understand it and to cooperate it and embrace it.

And on the other side of this impossibility, you will have a certainty of what your eternal future contains, an unshakeable confidence that Christ has done this for you, and a growing gratitude that expresses itself in all the things that you used to

do before; go to church, read the bible, pray, sing praise, serve and so on...

But it's all different now, deeper, more meaningful, instead of being something you do to be a good Christian, these things cause you to have more faith in Jesus and less faith in yourself because... you've been given a new reality that your life is in Christ, and His life is in you.

With your own efforts – this is impossible, but with God... all things are possible! Amen?

And by the way – the Lord may bring you up against an impossibility even if you've been brought to salvation, being plucked out the of net of the enemy, or called back like Levi the Tax Collector.

You see, our sinful human nature wants nothing more than to be self-justified, self-made, and self-righteous, to have God in our debt, owing us for who we are and what we've done, and we regularly need the reminder – that... is actually impossible.

So let us not be distracted by money, by examples of needles and camels, by how much it ought to cost us to follow Jesus and what we have or haven't given up. That's our sinful nature grasping at straws to turn them into works of self-righteousness.

Instead pay attention to the important questions; *“what must I do to inherit eternal life!” “Who then can be saved?”*

And trust in the good news *“With man this is impossible, but with God – all things are possible!”*

Then learn to live by grace brothers and sisters and obey Jesus's command. I pray you can see – it is worth it!

Follow Me. Amen.