Simple Faith

Mark 10:17-31

SS Lesson for 03/13/2016

Devotional Scripture: Heb 1:1-13

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- God can do all things and His plans cannot be thwarted (Job 42:2)
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Introduction

Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson
The lesson confirms that through Simple Faith we can believe that nothing is impossible for God to accomplish. The study’s aim is to recognize that God is able to do something on our behalf that looks impossible. The study’s application is to apply the truth of God’s ability to our trying or difficult situations we face.

(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)

Key Verse: Mark 10:27
But Jesus looked at them and said, With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible

Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary
This event probably took place as Jesus was leaving the house (cf. Mark 10:10) somewhere in Perea. The rich man illustrated those who fail to acknowledge their own inability to gain eternal life and to receive it as God’s gift (cf. vv. 13–16). As Jesus was setting out on His way (cf. 8:27) to Jerusalem (10:32) a man, influential, wealthy, and young (cf. Matt. 19:20, 22; Luke 18:18), came running to Him. His eager approach, kneeling posture, sincere form of address (Good Teacher, not used by Jews to address a Rabbi), and profound question revealed his earnestness and respect for Jesus as a spiritual Guide. This man’s question indicated that he viewed eternal life as something to be achieved by doing good (in contrast with Mark 10:15; cf. Matt. 19:16) and also that he felt insecure about his future destiny. References to eternal life (mentioned in Mark only in 10:17, 30), “entering God’s kingdom” (vv. 23–25), and being “saved” (v. 26) all focus on the future possession of life with God, though a person enters it now by accepting God’s rule in his earthly life. John’s Gospel emphasizes the present possession of eternal life. Jesus challenged the man’s faulty perception of good as something measured by human achievement. No one is good, absolutely perfect, except God alone, the true Source and Standard of goodness. The man needed to see himself in the context of God’s perfect character. Jesus’ response did not deny His own deity but was a veiled claim to it. The man, unwittingly calling Him “good,” needed to perceive Jesus’ true identity. (Later, however, he dropped the word “good,” v. 20.) In answering the man’s question directly, Jesus quoted five commandments from the so-called “second table” of the Decalogue (cf. Ex. 20:12-16; Deut. 5:16-20) but in a different order. Obedience to those commands dealing with human relationships are more easily verified in a person’s conduct than are the earlier commands (Ex. 20:3-8). The command, Do not defraud, not a part of the Decalogue and occurring only in Mark, may represent the 10th commandment (Ex. 20:17). But more likely, it is an appropriate supplement to the 8th and/or 9th commandments (Ex. 20:15-16) applicable to a wealthy person (cf. Lev. 6:2-5; Mal. 3:5). The man’s reply shows he firmly believed he had kept these commandments perfectly (cf. Phil. 3:6) since he was a boy, since age 12 when he assumed personal responsibility for keeping the Law as a “son of the Law” (bar Mitzvah; cf. Luke 2:42-47). Perhaps he had expected Jesus to prescribe something meritorious that he needed to do to make up for any lack. With a penetrating look (from emblepō; cf. 3:5), Jesus saw beneath the rich man’s religious devotion to his deepest need and loved him, something mentioned only in Mark (cf. 10:14). The one necessary thing he lacked was unrivaled allegiance to God, since wealth was his god (v. 22). He was devoted to it rather than God, thereby breaking the first commandment (Ex. 20:3). Jesus commanded two things: (1) The man was to go, sell all his assets, and give to the poor, thereby removing the obstacle blocking him from eternal life, namely, self-righteous achievement coupled with a love for money. (2) Also Jesus told him to follow (pres. imper.) Him to Jerusalem and the Cross. The way to eternal life was in turning from trust in self-attainments and earthly securities to trust in Jesus (cf. Mark 10:14-15). The man, saddened by Jesus’ directives, went away. This particular form of self-denial—to sell all—was appropriate in this situation but is not a requirement for all prospective disciples. When Jesus told the disciples that it is hard... for the rich to enter God’s kingdom, they were amazed.

Simple Faith
(ethambounto, “surprised”; cf. 1:27; 10:32) because in Judaism riches were a mark of God’s favor and thus an advantage, not a barrier, in relation to God’s kingdom. Only here in the Synoptic Gospels did Jesus address the Twelve as children (cf. John 13:33), reflecting their spiritual immaturity. In light of their surprise Jesus repeated and clarified His original statement. If the words “for those who trust in riches” (NIV marg.) are omitted, Mark 10:24 (which is unique to Mark) applies to everybody who is confronted with the demands of God’s kingdom. If included, they explain the rich man’s difficulty and expose the danger of trusting in riches. The humorous comparison (v. 25) employs a memorable Jewish proverb to depict the impossible. It is easier by comparison for a camel, the largest animal in Palestine at that time, to go through the eye of a common sewing needle (the smallest opening) than for a rich man who trusts in his riches to enter God’s kingdom. Jesus’ statement (v. 25) greatly amazed (exclêsstontō, “astounded, struck out of their senses, overwhelmed”; cf. 1:22; 6:2; 7:37; 11:18) the disciples. They carried it to its logical conclusion: If it is impossible for a rich man to enter God’s kingdom, Who then can be saved? (delivered to life eternal; cf. 10:17; 30). Jesus offset their concern by declaring that salvation is impossible with men—beyond their human merit or achievement—but not with God. It is not beyond His power to bring about because all things necessary for people’s salvation—rich and poor alike—are possible with God (cf. Job 42:2). What people cannot effect, God can and does by His grace (cf. Eph. 2:8-10). Acting as spokesman (cf. 8:29) Peter presumptuously reminded Jesus that the Twelve, unlike the rich man (we is emphatic in Gr., suggesting the contrast), had left everything to follow Him (cf. 1:16-20; 2:14; 10:21-22). The implication was, “What recompense shall we get?” (cf. Matt. 19:27) Again this reflected the disciples’ tendency to think of material honors in God’s kingdom (cf. Mark 9:33-34; 10:35-37; Matt. 19:28-29). In another solemn affirmation (I tell you the truth; cf. v. 15; 3:28) Jesus acknowledged that their allegiance to Him and the gospel (cf. 1:1; 8:35) entailed a break with old ties—home, loved ones, or property (fields), as the case may be (cf. 13:11-13; Luke 9:59-62). But to everyone who makes the break Jesus promised that all these things will be replaced a hundredfold by new ties with fellow disciples (cf. Mark 3:31-35; Acts 2:41-47; 1 Tim. 5:1-2) in this present Age, the time period between Jesus’ First and Second Advents. Then in the Age to come, the future Age following Jesus’ return (from a NT viewpoint), each will receive the ultimate recompense—eternal life (cf. Mark 10:17). In verse 30 the word “father” (cf. v. 29) is omitted since God is the Father of the new spiritual family (cf. 11:25). The words with them (the rewards), persecutions are added realistically by Mark alone. As Jesus said later (10:43-45) discipleship involves service, which often includes suffering. This was relevant to Mark’s Roman readers who faced persecution. This fact helped remove the temptation to associate with Jesus simply for the rewards (cf. v. 31). This “floating saying” (cf. these same words in other contexts: Matt. 20:16; Luke 13:30) could be intended as (a) a warning against Peter’s presumption (Mark 10:28), (b) a confirmation of Jesus’ promise (vv. 29-30), or most likely, (c) a summary of Jesus’ teaching about the servant nature of discipleship (cf. 9:35; 10:43-45). Rewards in God’s kingdom are not based on earthly standards such as rank, priority, or duration of time served, personal merit, or sacrifice (cf. Matt. 20:1-16), but on commitment to Jesus and following Him faithfully.

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Do you remember as a child longing to do things for yourself? When we were very young, we depended on adults to do almost everything for us. Adults dressed us, washed us, fed us, transported us—they took care of us in every way. But children are intent on doing things themselves. They want to learn to tie their own shoes, drive the car, and live life independently in every way. After we have established our independence as adults, we take pride in having done something on our own. We value our independence, and we like to express it. But none of us is truly independent. We depend on others all the time. Most of what we have, what we use, and what we do depends on what others have done to make those things and actions possible in the first place. As we approach the end of life, we often struggle against becoming more and more dependent on others. We desire to be independent not only of other people but of God as well. At the core of what the Bible calls sin is the human desire to become like God by becoming king of our own lives (Genesis 3:5). Sin is more than breaking God’s rules; it is declaring our independence from God. Today’s text deals with this universal human
desire. As the story develops, it lays bare our most stubborn illusion: the false belief that we can live life on our own. It draws us back to depend on God’s ever-sufficient grace and mercy.

Today’s text comes at a point where at least two key themes in the story of Jesus come together in Mark’s Gospel. One such theme is the attention that Jesus gave to the weak and marginalized of his culture. From his first public actions in Mark, Jesus deliberately acted on behalf of those who did not belong to the upper levels of society. He acted on behalf of “all the sick and demon-possessed” (Mark 1:32). He had fellowship with despised “tax collectors and sinners” (2:15). He criticized and warned those in power (7:6-8; etc.). In doing all this, Jesus turned upside down the cultural mores of his day, putting the lowly in the highest place and reducing those at the top to be at the very bottom. A second theme in today’s passage is the implication that Jesus intends his followers to be like children as he addresses them that way (Mark 10:24). In the section of text immediately preceding the one for this lesson, Jesus rebuked his disciples for forbidding children to come to him for blessing. Instead, he said that anyone who wanted to belong to God’s kingdom had to become “like a little child” (Mark 10:15; see also lesson 12). Taken together, these two themes speak against the idea of self-reliance when it comes to being part of the kingdom of God. Today’s text adds to our understanding in this regard. (Matthew 19:16-30 and Luke 18:18-30 are parallels.)

**Major Theme Analysis**

*Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV*

**Simple Faith and Goodness (Mark 10:17-18)**

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?"

18 And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.

**What can man do toward goodness (17)**

*Do good as we have the opportunity (Gal 6:10)*

10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

*Do good by being of benefit (Rom 5:7)*

7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die.

*Do good by letting our light shine (Matt 5:16)*

16 In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

*Do good by being good to our neighbors (Rom 15:2)*

2 Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.

*Do good by seeking the good for others (1 Cor 10:24)*

24 Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others.

*Do good by pleasing God (Heb 13:16)*

16 And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.
The goodness of God (18)

Only God is good and no one can equal it (from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator)
Jesus wanted to expose the self-righteousness and sinfulness of the rich young ruler. This explains his prefatory remark about the word "good." If the young ruler thought he was good enough to earn God’s favor, he needed to know that no one can equal God’s goodness. Christ was not saying that He Himself was not good. As God the Son, He embodied perfect goodness. He was asserting, rather, that unless the young man thought He was God, He had no business calling Him good (cf. Rom 3:10-18).

God is good whether He rewards or punishes (Jer 32:18-19)
18 You show love to thousands but bring the punishment for the fathers' sins into the laps of their children after them. O great and powerful God, whose name is the LORD Almighty, 19 great are your purposes and mighty are your deeds. Your eyes are open to all the ways of men; you reward everyone according to his conduct and as his deeds deserve.

God is good because He provides us faith to survive good and bad times (Prov 30:7-9)
7 “Two things I ask of you, O LORD; do not refuse me before I die: 8 Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. 9 Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, ‘Who is the LORD?’ Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God.

God is good because He supplies us with everything good (James 1:17)
17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

God is good therefore the least we can do is praise Him and be obedient to His Word (Ps 116:12-14)
12 How can I repay the LORD for all his goodness to me? 13 I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD. 14 I will fulfill my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people.

Simple Faith and the Law (Mark 10:19-22)
19 You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Do not defraud,' 'Honor your father and your mother.' "
20 And he answered and said to Him, "Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth."
21 Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me."
22 But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

Self-evaluation is not the final judgment of the Law (19-20)

Just because we don’t know of our sins doesn’t mean we are righteous (1 Cor 4:2-4)
2 Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. 3 I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. 4 My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me.

Man cannot discern his own errors all the time (Ps 19:12-13)
12 Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults. 13 Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. Then will I be blameless, innocent of great transgression.
*Man's ways seem right to him, but God knows the true judgment* *(Prov 21:2)*

2 All a man's ways seem right to him, but the LORD weighs the heart.

*We must conduct ourselves using God's direction and according to His grace* *(2 Cor 1:12)*

12 Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, in the holiness and sincerity that are from God. We have done so not according to worldly wisdom but according to God's grace.

*God is greater than our own understanding* *(1 John 3:17-22)*

18 Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. 19 This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. 21 Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God 22 and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him.

**The Law can be broken by breaking even one commandment (21)**

*Stumbling on one point of the law means guilt of the whole* *(James 2:10)*

10 For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.

*Teaching and disobedience means being least in or missing the Kingdom of Heaven* *(Matt 5:18-20)*

18 I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. 19 Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

*Trying to observe the law is alienating grace* *(Gal 5:3-6)*

3 Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. 4 You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. 5 But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope. 6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

**Don't let worldly lusts keep us from God (22)**

*No payment or worldly wealth is enough payment for one's life or soul* *(Ps 49:5-8)*

5 Why should I fear when evil days come, when wicked deceivers surround me-- 6 those who trust in their wealth and boast of their great riches? 7 No man can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for him-- 8 the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough--

*One must choose to worship and serve God because all else ends in disaster* *(Josh 24:14-15)*

14 "Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. 15 But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."
Fellowship with the world is hatred toward God (James 4:4)
4 You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

The world and its desires pass away, but the one who does the will of God lives forever (1 John 2:15-17)
15 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. 17 The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

Simple Faith and Wealth (Mark 10:23-25)
23 And Jesus, looking around, said to His disciples, "How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!"
24 The disciples were amazed at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, "Children, how hard 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 man to enter the kingdom of God."

Lust of wealth causes many to fall (23)

Fall because of trying to serve two masters (Matt 6:24)
24 "No one can serve two masters. 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 both God and Money.

Fall because of yielding to the temptation of "fast" money (1 Tim 6:9-10)
9 People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

Fall because of the exploitation of others (James 2:6)
6 But you have insulted the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court?

Fall because of evil self-indulgence (James 5:1-6)
5:1 Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you. 2 Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. 3 Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. 4 Look! The wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. 5 You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. 6 You have condemned and murdered innocent men, who were not opposing you.

What it takes to enter the Kingdom of God (24)

To enter the Kingdom of God, one must become like a little child (Matt 18:3)
3 And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."
To enter the Kingdom of God, one must be born of water and Spirit (John 3:5)

5 Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.

To enter the Kingdom of God, one must go through many hardships (Acts 14:22)

22 strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said.

Value of soul versus wealth (25)

Man should not exchange anything for his soul (Matt 16:26)

26 What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?

Wealth is worthless at the day of judgment (Prov 11:4)

4 Wealth is worthless in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death.

In the end, the gaining of wealth and possessions are meaningless (Eccl 2:22-23)

22 What does a man get for all the toil and anxious striving with which he labors under the sun? 23 All his days his work is pain and grief; even at night his mind does not rest. This too is meaningless.

We should consider everything a loss for the sake of knowing and following Jesus (Phil 3:7-8)

7 But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. 8 What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ

Simple Faith Recognized (Mark 10:26-31)

26 They were even more astonished and said to Him, "Then who can be saved?"
27 Looking at them, Jesus said, "With people it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God."
28 Then Peter began to say to Him, "See, we have left all and followed You."
29 So Jesus answered and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's.
30 who shall 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."

Recognize man's limited knowledge and power (26)

Man cannot even direct his own steps because they are directed by God (Prov 20:24)

24 A man's steps are directed by the LORD. How then can anyone understand his own way?

Man does not know the future and neither can he control nature, but God can (Eccl 8:7-8)

7 Since no man knows the future, who can tell him what is to come? 8 No man has power over the wind to contain it; so no one has power over the day of his death. As no one is discharged in time of war, so wickedness will not release those who practice it.
Man cannot boast of his wisdom or strength, only in God's power (Jer 9:23-24)

23 This is what the LORD says: "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, 24 but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the LORD.

Man is only competent in God (2 Cor 3:5)

5 Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God.

Recognize that with God nothing is impossible (27)

God can do all things and His plans cannot be thwarted (Job 42:2)

2 "I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted.

God is the creator and therefore nothing is too hard for Him (Jer 32:17)

17 "Ah, Sovereign LORD, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you.

Nothing is impossible for God (Luke 1:37)

37 For nothing is impossible with God.

Recognize that God is and has the only answer (28/29)

There is no other source of provision and protection but God (Isa 44:8)

8 Do not tremble, do not be afraid. Did I not proclaim this and foretell it long ago? You are my witnesses. Is there any God besides me? No, there is no other Rock; I know not one."

There is no other God but God Himself (Isa 45:5)

5 I am the LORD, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God. I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged me,

God is the only way, truth and life (John 14:6)

6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

God is the only way of salvation (Acts 4:12)

12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

Recognize that the true treasure is eternal life (30)

Eternal life given through grace (Rom 5:21)

21 so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Eternal life given as a gift of God (Rom 6:23)

23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Eternal life given to display unlimited patience (1 Tim 1:16)

16 But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.

Eternal life given through truth and understanding (1 John 5:20)

20 We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true — even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

Eternal life given through mercy (Jude 1:21)

21 Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from David Guzik

Jesus teaches on riches

1. (17-18) An eager man questions Jesus.

Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God."

a. **Good Teacher**: This title was never applied to other Rabbis in Jesus' day because it implied sinlessness, a complete goodness. Jesus and everyone else recognized that He was being called by a unique title.

   i. "There is no instance in the whole Talmud of a rabbi being addressed as 'Good Master.' "
   (Plummer, cited in Geldenhuys) Only God was called good by ancient rabbis.

b. **Why do you call Me good?** This was not Jesus denying His deity. Instead, He invited the young man to reflect upon it. It is as if Jesus said, "do you really know what you are saying when you call Me good?"

c. **What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?** The focus of the man's question is what shall I do. He thought eternal life was a matter of earning and deserving, not of relationship. As he bowed down on his knees in front of Jesus, the mere closeness of that relationship made him closer to salvation than anything he could do. He didn't want Jesus to be his savior; he wanted Jesus to show him the way to be his own savior.

   i. The man really didn't know who he was also. He thought that he was righteous and didn't really know the kind of person he was. When you don't know who Jesus really is, you probably don't know who you are either. And knowing Jesus comes first.

2. (19-22) Jesus' counsel to the young man.

"You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Do not defraud,' 'Honor your father and your mother.'" And he answered and said to Him, "Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth." Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me." But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.
a. **You know the commandments:** Being a Jew, this man knew the commandments. Jesus was careful to quote to him only those commandments from what is often called the second table of the law, addressing how we treat one another.

   i. Each one of these commandments is pure, just, and good. The world would be a much better place if everyone lived by just the five commandments Jesus mentioned here.

b. **Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth:** In his reply, this ruler said of himself that he had kept all these commandments, and that he has done so since his youth. This was possible according to the way these commandments were commonly interpreted but impossible according to the true meaning of God for these commandments.

   i. In Philippians 3:6, Paul said he thought he had kept all the commandments as a religious Jew. He wrote of his thinking at that time that he was concerning the righteousness which is in the law, [he was] blameless.

   ii. Yet in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave us the real meaning of the law - it goes to the heart, not just to actions. You can have a heart filled with adultery even if you never commit it; a heart filled with murder even if you never do it; a heart that steals even if you never steal. God looks at the heart as well as the actions.

   iii. The man *should* have responded, "There is no way I have kept or can keep the law of God completely. I need a savior."

c. **Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him:** Jesus was filled with loving compassion for this man because his life was so empty. He had climbed to the top of the ladder of success, only to find his ladder leaned against the wrong building.

d. **One thing you lack:** Instead of challenging the man's fulfillment of the law (which Jesus had every right to do), Jesus instead took him further down his own path. "So you want to find fulfillment and salvation by *doing* for God? Then here, *do* it all." Jesus wanted the man to see the futility of finding fulfillment or salvation through *doing*, but the man wouldn't see it.

   i. He also did not choose to love God more than his wealth, even though Jesus specifically promised him *treasure in heaven*. The man was more interested in the earthly treasure of men than in God's heavenly treasures. This man was essentially an idolater. Wealth was his god instead, the true God of the Bible. He put money first.

e. **Come, take up the cross, and follow Me:** This man, like all men by nature, had an orientation towards a works-righteousness; he asked *"what shall I do."* If we really want to do the works of God, it must begin with believing on Jesus, whom the Father has sent (John 6:29).

   i. Jesus' purpose wasn't to make the man sad; yet he could only be happy by doing what Jesus told him to do. So he **went away grieved**. Many people have almost everything, yet they are **grieved**.

3. (23-27) **The difficulty of riches.**

   Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!" And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, "Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches 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." And they were greatly astonished, saying among themselves, "Who then can be saved?" But Jesus looked at them and said, "With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible."
a. How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God . . . the disciples were astonished at His words: We are like the disciples. We have a hard time seeing how riches could hinder us from the kingdom of God. We tend to think that riches can only bring blessing and good.

i. The words of Jesus amazed the disciples because they assumed that wealth was always a sign of God’s blessing and favor. They thought that the rich were especially saved.

b. For those who have riches: We often excuse ourselves from what Jesus said here because we don’t consider ourselves rich. Yet compared to this rich young ruler, each one of us enjoys more luxuries and comforts than he did.

c. Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God! Riches present a difficulty because they tend to make us satisfied with this life instead of longing for the age to come. It is also true that riches must often be acquired at the expense of acquiring God.

i. We may contrast the dependence of a child with the independence of a rich man. Jesus indicated that it was much more likely that the child would inherit the kingdom of God instead of the rich man.

ii. Perhaps more importantly, the wealthy man is often a successful doer. He has done well, so he is rich. It is very easy for him to think that salvation and his relationship with the Lord is also a matter of successful doing, when really it is about humble receiving.

d. 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: With man, salvation is like a camel going through the eye of a needle. With God, it is possible.

i. "The camel was the largest animal found on Palestinian soil. The violent contrast between the largest animal and the smallest opening expresses what, humanly speaking, is impossible or absurd." (Lane)

ii. "Attempts have been made to explain Jesus' words about the camel and the eye of a needle in terms of a camel shuffling through a small postern gate, or by reading kamilon 'cable' for kamelon 'camel'. Such 'explanations' are misguided. They miss the point that Jesus is using a humourous illustration." (Morris)

e. With God all things are possible: However, God’s grace is sufficient to save the rich man. Biblically speaking we have the examples of people like Zaccheus, Joseph of Arimathea, and Barnabas, and through history many more examples.

4. (28-31) Our reward and the solution to the problem of riches.

Then Peter began to say to Him, "See, we have left all and followed You." So Jesus answered and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall 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. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”

a. See, we have left all and followed You: In contrast to the rich young ruler, the disciples had left all to follow Jesus; what will be their reward? This question seems typical of Peter.

i. Of course there is a special honor for the disciples. They will have a special place in the judgment, probably in the sense of administration in the millennial Kingdom. The apostles also had the honor of helping to provide a singular foundation for the church (Ephesians 2:20) and will have a special tribute in the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:14).
b. **There is no one who has left house or brothers . . . who shall not receive a hundredfold:** There will be universal honor for all who sacrifice for Jesus' sake. Whatever is given up for Him will be returned many times over, in addition to **eternal life.**

   i. **Hundredfold** is obviously not literal. Otherwise, Jesus promised a hundred mothers and a hundred wives.

c. **But many who are first will be last, and the last first:** This was the qualifying remark regarding the apostle's reward. All who sacrifice for the Lord will be rewarded, but God's way and timing of rewarding may not match up with man's way and timing of being rewarded. When God rewards, expect the unexpected.

   i. As the text continues in Matthew 20:1-16, Jesus taught the parable of the landowner and the workers - a powerful illustration of God's right and ability to reward in unusual (though never in unfair) ways.

   ii. "In the final account, it shall be found that no man has been a loser through giving up anything for the Lord Jesus Christ though he has his own method of deciding who are to be first and who are to be last." (Spurgeon)

5. (32-34) Jesus again announces His coming fate in Jerusalem.

Now they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was going before them; and they were amazed. And as they followed they were afraid. Then He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them the things that would happen to Him: "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles; and they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And on the third day He will rise again."

a. **They were amazed . . . they were afraid:** As they drew near to Jerusalem, the disciples sensed the danger of their mission. Jesus was a wanted man and yet **Jesus was going before them.** Therefore, the disciples **were amazed** at the courage of Jesus and **they were afraid** of the fate awaiting them all in Jerusalem.

   i. We sometimes don't think enough about the **courage** of Jesus. It took a tremendous amount of bravery for Him to walk straight towards His fate at Calvary and to walk **in front of** the disciples. The courage of Jesus is especially amazing in light of our frequent cowardice as Christians, afraid to stand out for Jesus. He wasn't afraid to stand out for us.

   ii. **As they followed they were afraid:** At the same time, the disciples are to be commended for continuing to follow Jesus. It is true they **were afraid**, but it is also true that **they followed.**

b. **They will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles:** Jesus already told His disciples that He would be crucified and rise again the third day (Mark 8:31). This is the first time in the Gospel of Mark where Jesus revealed that they would **deliver Him to the Gentiles.** This was an additional insult and betrayal.

   i. "Delivery to the Gentiles reveals that Jesus will be held in contempt by his own countrymen, for the Gentiles are the last people to whom the Messiah of the people of God should be handed over." (Lane)

   c. **And they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him:** Significantly, Jesus mentioned the **shame** of His suffering. Jesus suffered the most terrible emotional humiliation in His death, and it was done out of love for us.
i. This sharing in the shame of Jesus marked the early church and was evidence of their commitment and strength. Acts 5:41 says, *So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.* It’s not that the disciples rejoiced in the shame itself, because Jesus didn’t rejoice in the shame itself (Hebrews 12:2). Instead they rejoiced in identifying with Jesus and gladly suffered shame if they had to.

(Adapted from URL:http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/guz/view.cgi?book=mr&chapter=010)

**Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator**

1. It is natural (but wrong) to think we can do something to earn eternal life (Mark 10:17)
2. We are way too lenient on ourselves when it comes to God’s law (vss. 18-21)
3. Riches are dangerous because they can consume and corrupt our hearts (vss. 22-25)
4. Salvation really is impossible for us; only God can save us (vss. 26-27)
5. There is a cost to following Jesus, but the rewards are incalculable (vss. 28-30)
6. Our ideas of ranking and merit hold no sway with God; we must trust His wisdom (vs. 31)