

The rich young ruler

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[0 : 0 0] Our scripture reading this evening is taken from St. Mark's Gospel, chapter 10. Mark's Gospel, chapter 10, and we'll pick up the reading at verse 13.

And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them. And his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God.

Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.

And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and nailed to him, And asked him, Good master, what shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?

And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is God. Thou knowest the commandments, do not commit adultery, do not kill, do not steal, do not bear false witness, Defraud not, honour thy father and mother.

[1 : 3 7] And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest, go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor.

And thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved, for he had great possessions.

And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God? And the disciples were astonished at his words.

But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into 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 into the kingdom of God. And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved?

[3 : 0 0] And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God, for with God all things are possible.

Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee. And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospels.

But he shall receive an hundredfold, now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands with persecutions, and in the world to come eternal life.

But many that are first shall be last, and the last first. Amen. And may the Lord add his own blessing to his own holy and inspired word.

Let us pray. Eternal God, as we approach thy word, ask for that inspiration which only comes from thee, and we ask that thy word would be precious to us this night, because thy word is our code of conduct, and our passport, and our chart for the sea of life.

[4 : 36] We are travelling daily onto a shore that we have never touched before, but eventually all of us will reach the shore that we have to face the waters of Jordan, which are lapping over its banks.

And without the aid of Christ, it is impossible for us to get across to the safety of the other side. We give thee thanks for the promise that the children of Israel had, that when they reached there, they would see the power of God, and the majesty of God, and the ability of God to separate the waters and let them go across the sand dry land.

So it is for thy people, when they reached the banks of the Jordan, of the final breath, that the Lord of Heaven will be there to help them across and to meet them, because they have put their trust and their faith, and we remember Stephen of old, as he was being stoned for his faith and for his witness.

We remember his witness saying that he saw the heavens open and the Son of Man standing. And we give the thanks, Lord, that the Son of Man will welcome his own home.

Bless us, Lord, as we gather together and bless this congregation of thy people. Bless their minister and his wife and his wife and family, as they are away at this time.

[6 : 18] And we ask, Lord, that they would be renewed and refreshed in body and in spirit. Bless all those who uphold his hands here in service and prayer.

We ask that the Holy Spirit would come and minister among them. And we pray that for all the congregations of our land and to the far ends of the world. And remember, Lord, our need of thee at this time as a nation.

And we see so many factions and factions of people arguing among each other as to their own goodness and their own greatness and their own abilities and forgetting that they are servants.

Oh, Heavenly Father, that thy spirit would touch them so that those who are above us and things of a national interest would look to thee for inspiration and for guidance and that they would humble themselves before thee and call upon thee before they make decisions which affect everybody in the nation.

Lord, our God, help us to pray for them and help us to pray for this nation of ours as it seems to drift further and further away from thy word. Oh, God, help us then to remember that eventually all things must stop and be answerable to thee.

[7 : 41] Bless us now, Lord, and go before us and forgive us our sins and cleanse us as we approach thy word. Cleanse our hands as we touch it and our lips as we speak it and our hearts as we think upon it.

Come before us and forgive us our sins for Jesus' sake. Amen. Some of you might wonder what has been wrong when I'm back here again.

I'm here because I was invited to come. I'm here because I was allowed to come because I know that there is one who would have stopped me if I wasn't supposed to be here.

I'm here because I love you. I love you. I think that is the prime reason for me being here.

If we love Christ, we love Christ's people. And we love Christ's word and we love to do his work. And while I confess my inability to do what I want to do in a way that is pleasing to myself, I can only do it to the best of my ability.

[9 : 00] But as Dory told, I might have told it here, it's a sign of old age. I've heard that famous preacher, D.L. Moody, in America, he was preaching and he preached a sermon and as he approached the door on the way out at the end of the service, this lady stopped him and she said to him, Mr. Moody, I don't like the way you evangelize.

And he said to her, dear lady, I don't like some of it either, but it's the best I can do. Tell me, he says, how do you do it?

And she said, I don't. Well, he says, I prefer the way I do it to the way you don't. So I think that that explains really what somebody who stands up here feels like.

He only does his best. And if his best is not good enough for some people, he can't do much about it. But we know that everybody who has a critical mind should walk up here and stand here and try this because I'm telling you, it's a difficult occupation for any man to stand day after day and week after week and find a text that suits everybody within the congregation.

It's difficult. It's almost impossible. But the Word of God is the Word of God and it will be preached and it will be heard and some will accept it and some will not.

[10 : 39] And here we have the story of what happens when the Word of God is presented to a person. In Mark's Gospel, chapter 10, and at verse 22, we read about this young ruler.

And he was sad. Why was he sad? And he went away grieved. Why was he grieved? Well, the last time we were here, we looked at three people in the Bible and the Word of God and we saw that Paul was converted when he was, by the power of God, knocked off the back of his horse and he found himself in the dust on the Damascus Road.

We found Lydia at the prayer meeting and the Lord opened her heart. The gentle approach of God into Lydia's heart like the opening of a flower in the morning when the sun shines its first rays and the flower opens and Lydia's heart was opened to the call of God.

And we remember the jailer, the hard-hearted man who was ready to destroy himself because the earthquake had pushed open all the shackles and the doors and the gates and everything else that was holding the prisoner from that place and he was ready to destroy himself and he called, What shall I do?

What shall I do? And we heard the answer. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved on thy name.

[12 : 30] Tonight I want to look at another three people in the Word of God. This young ruler we find in Mark's Gospel and he came to Christ.

He came in a hurry. We read. He came running. He was, you could say he was desperate, sprinting to get to Christ.

There was an urgency in his desire. I wish we had that urgency instead of trudging along and just like people who are just going through the motions that we would get set and go get up and go like this like the prodigal of old when he said to himself I shall arise and he arose and went.

The difference is tremendous between the two statements. I shall arise and he arose are two different situations because without rising you don't go back to the Father.

Promising is one thing doing is another. Well this young man he came running and he said to Jesus what shall I do?

[14 : 12] What shall I do? There are a lot of people who think that they can do and earn their place with God by their works.

nothing wrong with good works but their secondary to commitment to Christ and to his word and to his gospel. What must I do?

And we know that the response from Jesus was that asked him if he knew the commandments and he lists some of them here and this man is quite confident about his ability to keep the commandments.

Well the first thing that strikes me about that is that if he was capable of keeping all of the law of God there was no need for him to come to Christ at all because Christ was the only one who was able to keep the complete law of God and to live it out in life because the law is such that if you break one small point of the law you're guilty of breaking the whole collection of the law.

One area of the law broken is the whole law broken the commandments are all broken because you're healed in one part.

[15 : 57] The law tells you that you must if you want to live you must completely uphold the law live the law in every little detail.

Live if you have kept the law but that's not what grace says. Grace says live because everything else is doing for you.

Christ has lived the law for you. Christ has kept the law for you. Christ has enhanced and lived the law the way it should be lived the way we couldn't live and only Christ can do that.

that's why you and I must depend on Christ for our salvation. Nothing of ourselves is able to save us.

Do not commit adultery do not steal do not bear false witness defraud not honour thy father and thy mother and he answered and said unto him master all these I have observed from my youth.

[17 : 00] you'll notice that the first part of the law was not mentioned thou shalt have no other gods before me.

and he answered and said I have observed all these from my youth and Jesus looking at them loved them.

Jesus loved them. and what was the response from Jesus?

One thing thou lackest go thy way sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor and thou shalt have treasure in heaven and come take up the cross and follow me.

Take up the cross and follow me. This young man with all his riches with all his property and life and all the things that he was envisaging for the rest of his days on earth he finds it almost impossible to contemplate being without them and to swap them for a cross.

[18 : 44] To swap them for a cross. What is a cross? Well a cross is a curse or a start. it's a curse that was prepared for those who had done wrong and you remember what the word of God says that cursed is anybody who is hanged in a tree.

It's a curse and if you have to carry it out and take it up and follow Christ with it you know that you're going to have people laughing at you and deriding you and calling you all sorts of things as you walk along life's journey.

You're not going to be popular if you're going to talk about Christ and commend Christ to a fallen race and to yourself because everything you say to others you're saying it to yourself because nobody is that perfect that he can speak to others without speaking to himself first and foremost so that the word of God is dealing with yourself as it deals with others and you're picking up your cross and you're putting it on your shoulder and you're struggling along life's journey with it and your cross is getting heavier and heavier as you travel because you know that your sins are laid upon him who was on the cross and your sins are heavy your sins are what made Christ sweat blood in the garden of Gethsemane your sins and mine was what made Christ sweat his blood on the ground of Gethsemane's garden see he held up the world with the strength of his hands everything he created he was able to hold and he never you never hear of him sweating but when the weight of your sins and my sins were laid upon him his sweat was like blood oozing through his holy body take up take up thy cross take up thy cross what your worth for the cross difficult for the young man he couldn't do it so what did he do he turned away he turned away and Jesus looked at him and he grieved when he turned away in the authorised version it says and he was sad at that saying and went away grieved grieved what a sad end to this man's enthusiasm when he came running to Christ and Christ offered him life and a way of life and a journey with him through life and he turned his back because he couldn't do what

Christ asked him to do he came with a request what must I do and when he was told what to do he couldn't do it isn't it like that for some of us we ask God for guidance in prayer and we get maybe a inkling of what God wants us to do and when we find what God wants us to do it's just not what we intend intended that God would tell us so we decide to just do what we intended rather than what God was suggesting to us this is what the young man did Christ loved him and yet he was the way grieved Christ Christ was sad because he didn't follow him Christ loved him as I said at the start if we don't love each other we don't care for each other we don't care for each other we don't care whether somebody goes to a lost eternity or goes to heaven because only love and the love of

Christ in you can make you want the best for them for everyone it doesn't matter who they are it doesn't matter whether they like you or not it doesn't matter whether they think you're trying to give them something that they don't want you still want it for them there's nothing in this life more important than Christ and his salvation and you want to have everybody partaking of it and enjoying it and embracing it and he went away grieving so I hope that nobody in this place tonight will get up out of here and grieve turn their back on the call of Christ and grieve because if you go out of here tonight and every other night you've gone out this door and you're still unsaved after all you've heard and all your minister has said to you and everybody else who has stood here and preached the word of God to you and you walk out that door the way this young man turned his back on Christ you too will grieve you too will grieve if not here you will grieve there and you'll remember everything that you heard from here and you will regret the fact that you didn't pick up the cross and follow

[25 : 20] Jesus so that was the ruler the young ruler the grieving ruler in the book of Acts chapter 24 and verse 25 you will find these words verse 24 and after certain days when Felix came with his wife to Scylla which was a Jew he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ and as he reasoned for righteousness and temperance and judgment to come Felix trembled I was trembling have you ever trembled under the word of

God of course you have I'm sure you have I'm sure you have many times you sat under the word of God being preached and you think that you're the only one in the minister's eyesight and eyeline or thoughts and he's speaking to you directly and he's speaking to no one else and there's nobody else in the place but yourself and that preacher is preaching directly into your spirit and into your soul and you know find that this word is touching you and you're trembling have you ever felt like that do you ever feel like that do you feel like that tonight because the word of God is the same word it doesn't matter who's preaching it it doesn't matter what his abilities are or lack of abilities are the word of God is the word of God and the spirit of God can apply it and the spirit of God applies it are you trembling do you tremble do you want to tremble or are you quite happy in your hard hearted state sitting there as if word of

God is for somebody else and nothing to do with you doesn't concern you you don't need that kind of stuff Felix trembled and Felix made this well known statement to Paul when I have a convenient season I will call for thee when I have a convenient season I will call for thee and there are many congregations who will say the same thing tomorrow next week next year I'll call on God and put things right with him and maybe when the young people here will say well when I'm old like that man standing there when I'm old like that

I'll think about it then because he certainly wouldn't have much time left to put things right if he hasn't a little ready he doesn't seem to have a lot of time left here so so I'll wait till I'm about that age and I'll put things right with God how many of my contemporaries are no longer here they've long disappeared from the sin of time time time is not to be played with not to be played with when your soul is concerned when I have more conveniences when it suits me when it pleases me I shall send for you I shall send for you you'll be there anyway you'll be ready to come and as soon as

I call you'll be ready to come and deal with these things you'll come and speak to me when I send for you that's not the way of God the way of God is today today if you hear my voice this is the convenient season this is the time the accepted time not tomorrow because tomorrow never comes nobody has ever lived tomorrow nobody has ever lived because tomorrow never comes it's today it's always today the convenience convenient convenient convenient for whom convenient for Felix convenient for Paul it's very seldom yet

[31 : 46] I think that's convenient for both parties you look at our nation just now and you'll see how inconvenient everything is for anybody nobody seems to agree on anything but God has agreed with Christ that he would have a church and that he would have a bride and the bride is being prepared at this very moment and being added to and the bride is being glorified and decked with the holiness of Christ and covered with the robe of righteousness and we're still waiting for our conveniences in the fruit of Christ we don't want to be under the robe we don't want to be covered by his righteousness we are happy in our own filth because that's what our self-righteousness is compared with in the word of God of filthy rhymes that's what we're happy in if we refuse

Christ if we refuse that garment that covers everything that we have brought into life and walked a long life's journey with and we want to get rid of it and Christ covers it with a garment of faith you'll remember and I don't need to remind you but I will about the prodigal on his return and that great story that Christ told about the certain man who had the two sons and one went off and enjoyed his riotous living with what he got of his father's inheritance and he blew it and he lost everything friends and finance and hope and appearance and fragrance everything that you could imagine he lost he smelled of pigs and swill and he was covered with that work when he decided to go back to his father and confess his feelings and ask his father forgiveness and ask his father to make him as one of his servants and he came when his father ran to meet him and fell upon him and kissed him and kissed him and kissed him to such an extent that he couldn't utter the words he had prepared when he left the far country and he fell upon him and he took him home and his request was bring out the best row not any row but the best row the best row which was waiting for the son it was ready waiting for him and they took it out and they put it on him and he was covered all his filth and everything else that he had brought from the half country was obscured covered are you covered are you covered what an insurance this is you don't see this one advertised on your telly covered by the grace of

God for the word of God tells us that he was made sin so that we might be made righteous what an exchange that is he was made sin who knew no sin so that we might be made the righteousness of God and him covered and Felix declined the offer it wasn't convenient for him is it convenient for us tonight to come to Christ confess our sins we're all sinners every one of us because the word of God tells us there was none righteous not even one not even one is it convenient for you tonight to come to Christ to ask forgiveness to ask to be covered and to go home the cover of

Christ on you around you within you and without remember what that robe has for you remember how it's constructed remember the colors in it remember the sacrifice in it remember the obedience in it remember that he gave himself for you his humility his obedience to the call of God on his life for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son he gave him he didn't give him in part he gave him the whole of his son he gave for your salvation him it's not something that he does in small measure like the lady with the alabaster box she broke it she broke it she gave it all in worship of Christ

God gave all of his son for you and for me will you tremble we should tremble at the goodness of God for an undeserving people because that's what we are we turned our back on and when he speaks to us we either accept him or we reject him and every time we hear of him we do one or the other and the trembling governor then the grieving young ruler and the trembling governor and the last point of

[39 : 03] God is the acts 26 verse 28 and I don't think there are many prizes going for for this one because I'm sure you all know what this one is about God verse 28 Acts 26 verse 28 then Agrippa said unto Paul almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian almost one of the most awful words you can hear about somebody this almost so near yet so far I think I've used this illustration somewhere before

I travelled here about the disaster out at Stornowes long ago which was commemorated recently the year stay 1919 it happened when the soldiers and sailors were coming home at the end of the war and coming across from Kyle to Stornoway and coming towards the harbour and seeing the lights and knowing the lights some of them because they knew their own homesteads and they could see the lights of their homes and because the ship went off course it smashed into the rocks at Holland and they were lost almost home almost almost with their families almost in the warmth of their own homes some of them scrambled ashore on ropes some of them swept off ropes almost on the shore almost almost almost almost saved this holy lost almost saved this holy lost that doesn't change

Agrippa was a king and here's Paul reasoning with him Paul was not shy when he came to preach in the gospel doesn't matter who was in front of him didn't matter that Agrippa was a king Paul was going to put the issues of life and death before him and talk about Jesus Christ and he's witnessing to him witnessing to him about the issues of life and he's telling him what's happening what does he tell him well he tells him about his own conversion tell him about that day on the roads of Damascus and the light shone around him and he was on his way to destroy the witness of

Christ the church he was on his way to apprehend to only put them to death as many as he could apprehend he was a bad man was Saul of Tarsus he was a bad man it's not the kind of fellow you would want to meet if you are a Christian it's not a companion for a roadside journey on a dark night you wouldn't want him as your fellow hiker let's put it like that you wouldn't want to be in an encampment with him because you wouldn't know what time he would get up and apprehend you or take you aside if you were one of Christ that's the kind of man he was he was ruthless he was doing what he thought was right he was full of the law he knew it all knew it all self centred self opinionated a clever man well read well taught and here he is with paper authority he had to go and apprehend these people and he's riding into

Damascus on his horse full of himself and full of what he was going to do and all of a sudden he stopped in his tracks and he finds himself not on the majestic horse he would have ridden but in the dust on the ground in the dust and that's the place to learn that's the place to learn Gamaliel's feet were fine but they didn't teach him what he learned down there in the dust and he learned that Christ was speaking to him why are you persecuting me Christ said Christ said he acknowledged him as Lord he was blind he was led into the city and what do we hear of him when

[45 : 20] Ananias is told to go and speak to him and Ananias was quiet reluctant to do so because he had heard so much about him but God says to him he's a chosen vessel of mine he's a chosen vessel of mine he's got to learn the hard way what it is to be my servant to be my apostle but he's praying that's the difference now he's praying and the holy man went in to see him and he put his hands on him and he says Saul brother my brother my brother here is the love of God being demonstrated the man who was persecuting and murdering the witnesses of Christ being called a brother of the church have we got that grace within us if we think our passion is this or that and we're not agreeing with him do we love him enough in Christ to call him our brother

I hope so almost though persuaded me almost how are you tonight are you past the almost stage have you gone beyond just being nearly there nearly there nearly there it's not near enough when Paul asked Christ on Damascus road what do you want me to do remember what he replied go into the city and there you'll be told what you have to do and you want to get into the will of God tonight and you want the will of God to reveal to you what you must do if you're outside of Christ to say to yourself well if God would only reveal that to me well my dear friends

I think you've got it wrong because if you go into the city go into the will of God God will then reveal what you have to do what he's got set up for you not the other way around not outside will God reveal himself to you regarding his will go in to the city go in to salvation and then you'll find that God will reveal what you are able to do and what he has in store for you almost no good no good you'll stay there almost won't take you anywhere almost will persuade us to you no I'm not persuading you the word of God I pray will persuade you the word of God is the only one who is able to persuade you and make you cross that threshold which has been so high that you haven't got over it yet you haven't got over it yet but you remember the picture you have of the of the temple there remember it remember it when the Lord

Jesus Christ was crucified and the earth was trembling and rocks were splitting and everything else and the veil of the temple was rent in twain rent in two and it was rent from the top to the bottom so that the feeblest and the lamest could walk through it everybody it was an access for everybody not just for those who were able to jump or able to climb but for everybody to get through almost was on the outside because they didn't want to go through only those who wanted to live and to know and to find and to seek and to pray and not to tremble and not to grieve they're the ones who had we don't hear much about the young man we don't hear anything about him whether he ever came back whether his riches were so that he preferred them to the cross that

Christ was offering we don't hear much about Felix either that he ever found a convenient season nor about Agrippa or he was a king he was a king but only an earthly king who was reluctant to bow his knee to the heavenly king we don't hear that he ever changed his mind but he almost ever became a certainty to you and to me tonight the lessons of these three personalities in the bible are things to take home with us I hope and pray that God will bless our feeble efforts together to make you think at least of where you are are you grieving or are you joyful tonight are you trembling because you're outside or are you trembling with joy because you've got over the hurdle that was in your life

[51 : 44] I see almost become yes Lord I am coming coming now to thee wash me cleanse me in the blood that flow to uncalled me amen let us pray eternal God help us then to accept what thou hast given us to think about and erase from our mind anything that is not in accordance with thy spirit bless our gathering together and bless us as we go through the night watches knowing that there is one who watches over his own help us Lord to remember those who are less fortunate than losers those who have persecuted for their faith we ask Lord that thy guidance and thy protection would be their portion bless those among us who are thinking of going to foreign fields in a short time we ask thy blessing upon them and thy safekeeping and thy portion to be their portion as they journey onwards and ask that thy spirit would go before them to open a path for them bless us now Lord and part us with thy blessing for we ask it all in the name of

Jesus Christ our Lord Amen grace mercy and peace from God the Father Son and Holy Spirit rest and abide with you all and all God's people everywhere and forever more Amen