

**Mark 10:17-22**

17 As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 18 Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. 19 You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honor your father and mother.'" 20 He said to him, "Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth." 21 Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." 22 When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions (NRSV).

Jesus is in Galilee and he has covered a wide area. From the other gospels we know that he is on his way to Jerusalem. He is on a mission of healing and teaching but much more important than that is his mission of offering salvation to the world. A man approaches Jesus and wants to know what it will take to have eternal life. Obviously this is a good man, he is trying to be righteous. He does the right things, and has kept the commandments of God ever since he was a child. Of all the people in society, this is a very good man. He runs up to Jesus indicating a good degree of excitement. He kneels before Jesus indicating the reverence for Jesus. He asks Jesus "What must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Jesus' response to the man is to obey the commandments of God. It is a simple solution; obey the word of God. Obeying the commandments is an ongoing lesson of the Bible. It is necessary to let God rule over your life then and now. Jesus cites specific commandments that deal with human relationships. You know the big 10, they are found in Exodus and Deuteronomy. The commandments of God are directions that direct human behavior. They guide us on how we are to treat God and how we are to treat others. The man's response is he has done it ever since he was a child. Jesus' response is you need to surrender your stuff and follow him.

Now we get to a problem. In the Bible there is always a problem. That's because there is always a contrast between human will and the will of God. This particular man has a history of following the law. Apparently he realizes that obeying the letter of the law is not enough. He knows the grand prize is treasure in heaven but he thinks it is a matter of human achievement. This lesson is more than a lesson on stewardship and wealth. The Bible does not condemn wealth or successful commerce. There are many Bible heroes that were wealthy. What the Bible condemns is transgression from the will of God. The real problem here in today's Scripture is that the man refused to follow Jesus. He could not get treasure in heaven because he could not give up his treasure here on earth. This rich man is a troubled man. He wanted eternal glory but was unwilling to let go of his stuff. He is looking for satisfaction based on human terms and is not willing to surrender his belongings or his life to follow Jesus.

This is a very applicable contemporary lesson. The man believes in Jesus. The man was even excited to meet Jesus but he refused to actually follow Jesus. There was an obstacle in his path. We all have obstacles. Each one of us have different ones. Things get in the way of our relationship with the Lord. This lesson applies to everyone that has ever given an excuse for why they fail to worship God or fail to be devoted. You have to surrender and follow Jesus. The disciple only needs one thing and that is Jesus. When Jesus sent out his disciples in teams of two proclaiming repentance, they were sent out with no bread, no bag, and no money. All they

needed was what Jesus has to offer. All you need is Jesus. The irony of the rich man is that he refused the very thing that he was looking for. He came to Jesus, the source of salvation, looking for salvation, and ended up refusing it. The problem is not that the man was rich. The problem is that he failed to surrender.

The lesson emphasizes an Old Testament theme of letting God rule over your life. Jesus points out the conflict. It's the same basic fundamental principle. Dedicate your life to the will of God and let God rule over your life. It's the same basic lesson as being born again or being dead to sin. So, what do we want? Each one of us has a different answer. The number one thing or all things, of all my wants and desires, is to get to heaven. Number two is I want to be able to help others get there. However, when we think about what we want it is usually in human terms.

The man recognized Jesus as one with authoritative knowledge but his mind was set on human things. The answer to his problem and ours is to surrender and follow Jesus. The new life is not based on human achievement or merit. It is impossible for us to inherit eternal life based on our own human resources. For any of us to have treasure in heaven is a matter of divine grace.