

Mark 10:17-22

“What Must I Do?”



Today's Gospel tells of a man who asked a very important question, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" A religious system's answer to this one question will tell us more about that religion than the answer to any other question. This question also tells us something about humanity's natural approach to religion. We can ask this question in many different ways: "What must I do to find favor with God?" "What must I do to be justified before God?" "What must I do to get on God's good side?" You see, the ultimate true center of any religion is its answer to this question.

All the religions of the world, including Christianity, have guidelines for living. The Bible has the Ten Commandments. Islam has the Five Pillars. Buddhism has the Eight Fold Path. Each and every religion in the world has teachings that tell us what we must do in order to justify ourselves before whatever ultimate authority it believes in. The man in today's Gospel was asking the question that gets to the heart of any religion.

Never the less, there is a contradiction in his question. The contradiction is between the verbs "do" and "inherit." In order to inherit something, you must be named in a will and the person who made the will must die. You don't "do" anything. It is the person who makes the will who places you in the will. You have nothing to do with it. You really can't do anything to inherit anything. Either you are in the will or you are not in the will. It's not up to you. It is not about what you do, it really about who you are in Christ.

Never the less, the man asked the question, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Since the man asked what he had to do, Jesus told this man to examine his life in terms of the Commandments: "You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.'" We commonly call this the second table of the law. It deals with

loving your neighbor as you love yourself. He couldn't love His neighbor as self because He showed that He didn't love God above all things.

These words should have crushed the man, for no one loves his neighbor as he loves himself. Instead the man replied, "Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth." The context of this passage leads us to believe that this man truly believed these words. Jesus had piled up a collection of commands that should have had this man begging for mercy. Instead, this man actually thought he had kept these commands. ***slide #2*****



It is at this point in the conversation that Jesus pointed out the man's true failure. [Jesus] said to him, "You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." With these words, Jesus revealed the man's heart. He did not fear, love, and trust in God above all things. Instead, his fear, love, and trust were all based on his money and possessions. In spite of all his good works, this young man had gold for a god.

What is your god? What do you fear, love, or trust above all things? What if Jesus appeared to you today and asked you to give up something. Is there anything He could ask that would cause you to walk away from Him? Every time we sing "A Mighty Fortress is Our God," we sing about giving up our life - our goods, fame, child, or wife. Do you mean it when you sing it? What about your pride - your dignity. What if Jesus asked you to give up your cell phone or your computer? What about your need to always be right? What if Jesus asked you to give up your standing in the community? If you are honest, you too, must admit that you are also guilty of fearing, loving, or trusting something or someone more than you fear, love, and trust in God. You must admit that you are an idolater deserving of death.

Perhaps you are one who thinks about money much of the time. You can't help it because you are so deep in debt. You can't sleep because collectors won't leave you alone. Several of you have attended Financial Peace University or read Dave Ramsey's book, the Total Money Makeover. If you are living in fear because of money, please visit with me and I can direct you to resources that have helped my family using Biblical principles to handle money. One very simple way is to download the "Everydollar" app so you can budget your money and tell every dollar where it should go before the next month begins. Don't be afraid to ask for help.

Our Gospel tells us that Jesus loved this man with *αγάπη* love. Jesus told this man what he needed to hear, not what he wanted to hear. This man needed to learn the hopelessness of his situation. He needed to understand that he needed a savior outside of himself. That is how Jesus showed His love to this man - even if it meant that the man would walk away sorrowful.

Jesus loves us the same way. He sends the Holy Spirit to convict us of our sin. The Holy Spirit comes to us through the Word of God and shines the searing light of the law into our hearts. He shows our true nature to us. He takes us to the depths of pure terror as He shows us the future we have earned for ourselves. "You are dead in your trespasses and sins." He shows us the true hopelessness of our good works.

The wages we have earned through our sin is death. It is at the lowest point that the Holy Spirit brings the soothing message of the Gospel into our lives. When we realize that there is no hope for us in ourselves, the Holy Spirit shows us the hope that is in God. He shows us how God entered history in the person of the man Christ Jesus. He reveals Christ to us as the one who kept the law perfectly in our place.

HE PAID YOUR DEBT



*** Slide 3 *** Through the Word of God, the Holy Spirit takes us to the cross to show us how Jesus suffered and died to take our place as the target of God's wrath against sin. ***For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*** (2 Cor 5:21) The Holy Spirit informs us that Jesus did not remain buried in the tomb of death, but rose

victorious over sin, death, and the power of the devil. Finally, the Holy Spirit gives us the faith that trusts Jesus for salvation.

Through that faith we constantly receive the forgiveness of our sins, God declares us holy in his eyes, and we inherit eternal life. We stop asking the question, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Instead, the Holy Spirit points us to Jesus and declares, "Look what God has done to give you eternal life."

4

[1 John 1:7] "The blood of Jesus [God's] Son cleanses us from all sin. Everything in the Bible points to the fact that we do not inherit heaven based on what we do. Instead, we inherit heaven based on what God has already done.



*** Slide 4 ****The stumbling block for the man in our text was his money and possessions. They had become his god. The same thing can happen to us. He didn't recognize some very simple truths about money. He forgot that God is the owner of everything, including money. Everything that we have been given is simply on loan for us to use while we live our lives here on earth. We are simply managers whom God has entrusted to make wise use of these gifts.

An easy way to discover a person's priorities is to look at their where they spend their money and where they spend their time. We invest time and money in the things that are important to us. The Bible has a lot to say regarding our attitude about money.



***** SLIDE MALACHI *****

In Malachi 3 we hear about the blessing of giving back to the Lord. "Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is

no more need.” (Malachi 3:10). The Lord is daring us to give even as He promises to bless us even more. We don’t give in order to get. We give back in response to what He has already done for us. At the same time, we cling to His promise to surely bless our giving.

We rejoice in paying off our current loan for Shepherd of the Valley. I am grateful to the Lord for you and your diligent giving to this effort. Even as we celebrate this milestone in the life of our congregation, we also look forward to what the Lord might have in store for our ministry into the future. How might He use our congregation to bring even more of our neighbors the wonderful good news of sins forgiven for Jesus’ sake? Opportunities abound for us to support ministry locally, in our region, in our nation and internationally. We are blessed to have Luther preschool right here in our building. More than 20 3-5 year-olds gather mornings to learn social skills, basic preschool skills like how to write your name and count to ten. Every day they have Jesus’ time where they hear the truth of God’s love for them in Jesus. Parents and grandparents intercept our lives as they drop off and pick up their children, as well as at special programs. What a blessing to have our building used throughout the week for the forming and shaping of kids in our community into Christ.

Yes, ministry costs money. Whether it is Shepherd’s Hill at the Crossroads, children in orphanages in Kenya as part of Project 24, or congregations and families devastated by Hurricane Michael, opportunities to lovingly support ministry with our first-fruit gifts abound. We do so in response for all that the Lord has done for us. We have an eternal inheritance, won for us by Christ who, out of love for us sinners, paid the full price for our sin. We don’t have to do anything. It has been done for

you by Christ. *** 1 Peter 1:18-19 slide *****



It was out of love for you that Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice. Peter puts it this way. you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, ¹⁹but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. 1 Peter 1:18-19

Because of the holy, precious blood of Jesus, your sins are forgiven. Your inheritance in heaven is secure. You do not have to go away sad like the rich man in the text. Rather, you have been brought near to Christ in

your baptism. In these waters, your name was written in the Lamb's book of life. You are precious to Him and He gives You His best in giving you His Son. You have greater riches than this world can offer. Forgiveness, life, and salvation are a free gift earned for you at Calvary's cross. You have the eternal treasure of unending joy in heaven. Again, it isn't what we do to earn eternal life, it is who we have been made through the merits of Christ our Lord. You are a forgiven child of God and heir of heaven that was made yours in your baptism into Christ.

When the time comes for us to leave this life, we will inherit eternal life as members of the Church Triumphant in heaven. There, in heaven, we will leave our sins behind and live under Jesus in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true. Amen