

Salvation is Only Possible With God

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[0 : 00] Good morning.

Wonderful day. I assume everyone's enjoying the cool nights and the warm 70s days, right?! Feels great. Well, I've been poking fun at our new pastor a little bit.

Are you ready? So I met with him one day, and we're just having some good fellowship, and I go and look at his car, and I look at his rear license plate.

Florida! Florida license plate! I mean, you don't got Dubuque license plates yet? Well, I'm happy to say, you can go look at his car. It says Dubuque, Iowa license plates.

So it's official. He loves us. You love us, right? Do you love me? I love you. Gosh.

[1 : 06] All right. Yeah. And I've got some pastor friends from our little association of churches, and they call me up, and they go, well, how's it going with that new pastor?

Fantastic. Amazing. Super great. All the above. That's what I tell them. So, yep. And the hard work that you've been doing is felt by all of us, so we appreciate that.

And most importantly, I know that both of you love the Lord a lot, and that's the example that we all have. And hopefully we're going to learn more about that today from the Gospel of Mark, and I'm excited to get into that.

So, I got my clicker. Whoops. It says teaching. There you go. Yep. Thank you.

I'm good now. So, let's, I don't have the story on slides, but I will have some other stuff. So, if you have your Bibles, I know we're trying to encourage people to open up your Bibles.

[2 : 18] If you want to open up to Mark, grab a Bible underneath. Mark chapter 10, verse 17. And let's just read the story going through 31.

It's kind of a famous story, or some of these stories are more renowned than others. It's about a rich young ruler. And let's see what God has for us here today.

So, starting in verse 17. And as he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to him and knelt before him and began asking him, Good teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

And Jesus said to him, Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. 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. And he said to him, Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth up.

[3 : 19] And looking at him, Jesus loved him. And said to him, One thing you lack. Go and sell all you possess. And give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven.

And come, follow me. But at these words he was saddened, and he went away grieved. For he was one who owned much property.

And Jesus looked around and said to the disciples, How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God. And 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. 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 even more astonished, saying to him, Then who can be saved? Looking at them, Jesus said, With people it is impossible, but not with God.

[4 : 11] All things are possible with God. Peter began to say to him, Behold, we have left everything and followed you. Jesus said, So as we start our message today, I just want us all to recall when we first met the Lord.

When we were called to discipleship. That's part of what this story is about today. We see fishermen leaving nets to follow Jesus. We see tax collectors leaving their tax booth to follow Jesus.

And I was thinking back about my calling. It happened spring of 1989. I was a teacher over at UW-Platteville.

I was a math teacher there. That's where my calling happened. And people shared with me truth. And I can remember accepting the Lord there. And one of the things that we're going to learn today is a little bit about what that calling is like.

How it happens about this rich young ruler and his trial with this trying to figure out about eternal life. And how does that happen?

[5 : 47] And one of the things also that I want you to think a bit about is when you were called, when you became a Christian, was there something that you left?

Was there an idol in your life that you left? Because we don't serve two gods. An idol God and God himself. And I was thinking, what was my idol when I left?

And I think I wasn't wealthy. I mean, my first job, the pay wasn't that great, honestly, for being a college math teacher. My pay wasn't all that great.

But I think one of my idols was the prestige. Oh, look at Tim here. I was this college math instructor. That was an idol. An idol of mine.

And I had to leave that, repent from that. And when I accepted the Lord, I made him God. It doesn't mean that we can't still struggle with idols. We know we do. But I had the Holy Spirit with me, and I left that idol to follow the Lord.

[6 : 46] And it's been awesome. It's been an awesome time following God. It's been ups and downs, but mostly good. Because God's good. And it's good to remember that today. It's how good God is.

And what he's done for us. So I just wanted you to just ponder that a little bit. Your calling. What was that like? Was there an idol that you forsake in following God? Because that's what this story is about. And, yeah.

Let's go to the first verse here. Verse 17. And as he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to him and knelt before him. And began asking him, good teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

And I forgot to pray, so we're going to do that right now. Lord, I want to say thank you for this beautiful service we have here. The worship time. The fellowship time. The greeting time.

Sunday school. Prayer time before. All these amazing opportunities to connect to you. Continue, Lord. Open our hearts. What it is the word is going to teach us today.

[7 : 51] Lord, help my mouth speak truth. Clarity. I'm excited for our family. The love we have here feels so good. Lord, we do have a great life.

When we came to know you, help us remember that today. What you've given us. The Holy Spirit lived and dwells in us. If you've accepted him by faith, then we just give you the glory.

Amen. So there, Jesus continues on his journey to Jerusalem. And we believe his time is getting very close.

Weeks, perhaps, to the crucifixion. And he's still teaching these disciples. And this man comes eagerly.

And he knelt before him, before Jesus. This rich young ruler that we've been talking about. Calls him good teacher. And he asks this amazing question.

[8 : 50] What shall I do to inherit eternal life? We don't see that question until now. But that's a question I hear from people all the time. How am I going to get into heaven?

You know, what's eternal life going to look like? It's in, oh, and by the way, in Luke, some of the other gospels also have this story. And in Luke 18, 18, it does call him a ruler.

It doesn't say it in Mark, but it does in 18. So this man has some stature of power and wealth. And here he is coming to the only person that can help him to know about eternal life.

That's great hope. There's great hope for this guy. He's coming to Jesus. The one person you need to come to, he did it. He's doing it. It shows great promise.

He kneels down. All those things. Calls him good teacher. Again, that all-important question, how do I inherit eternal life?

[9 : 51] We can read a lot of scripture verses about eternal life. And we're going to get to some of these in a little bit. I'm not going to read them this morning, but if you go to 1 John 5, verse 11-13, it talks about eternal life, how to have eternal life.

John 3-16 talks about how to have eternal life. For God so loved the world that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life, everlasting life.

So we know there's a lot written about it, and we're going to talk about these things. So the story starts with a great certainty of hope for this man, this rich, young ruler.

There's hope for him. He's coming to Jesus. He's asking these questions. How to get into heaven? How to have eternal life? That's exciting. That's encouraging. Let's continue on.

And Jesus said to him, Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments. Do not murder. Do not commit adultery. Do not steal.

[10:57] Do not bear false witness. Do not defraud. Honor your father and mother. So Jesus doesn't give the answer to the man right away about how to have eternal life.

Instead, he poses questions and gets this guy to start thinking. Why do you call me good?

Well, it's true. The Jews believe only God is good. We know the Scripture teaches none are good, no, not one. Is that Romans says that verse?

You can look that up. None are good, it says. So that's a good thing. He's recognizing some real clear authority on Jesus. I don't know if he knows he's God or not.

Very few really understood that principle. And he talks about all these commandments. Do not murder. Do not commit adultery.

[11:55] There's one in there. Do not defraud. Is that one of the Ten Commandments? Do not defraud? I don't think it is. It's not one of the Ten Commandments.

But Jesus adds it in. I wonder if that's because he was rich. And it was not uncommon for rich people to defraud poor people. We don't know if this man ever did that.

But that was one of the commands he puts in there to get this man thinking. It was a test. It was a test.

He doesn't give the answer, but he's testing this man's heart with these commandments. And I can tell you, many people over the years that I've talked to have said, I've lived a pretty good life.

I've obeyed these commands mostly. I think I'll get in. I'll get in. And by the way, these commandments, it's an excellent evangelistic tool to ask people questions.

[13:00] There's something about the questions that Jesus asks to get people thinking and processing what's going on, to get them to think. In my math classes when I teach math, I love to ask questions.

Because if I just give them the answer, I don't really get it. They have to think through what the answer is at some point in time. Questions is a really good thing.

You can ask people, have you obeyed the Ten Commandments? Maybe there's a time and place for that. Have you ever stole? Have you ever lied? God. Because we have to convince people of their sinful nature.

If they want to come to know the Lord, because that's what it's about. That's what it's about, forgiveness from our sinful nature. So that's something I've been thinking about from those, Jesus is asking these questions.

And so here is, here is verse 20, what does he say? And he said to him, teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth up. Sounds like, almost like a proud statement, really.

[14:08] I mean, who can keep all the commandments perfectly, right? That's unheard of. But again, people think, you know, they think that way.

This is not uncommon. People think, I have a pretty good life. You know, it's not perfect, but it's pretty good. I think if God asks if I get in, 80% chance I'll get into heaven. Again, I thought like this too, living a good life.

My job, it's not uncommon. If you've got your Bibles handy, let's look at, I want to see what Paul said about this. Philippians chapter 3, let's go there.

Philippians chapter 3, verse 6. Philippians is one of those little books in the New Testament there, right? A couple books after Corinthians.

It's really interesting, this verse. 3, verse 6. So it's talking about Paul here.

[15:13] As to zeal, a persecutor of the church. That's what Paul was. As to the righteousness which is in the law, found blameless. He thought he was blameless.

They're talking about him being blameless. Of course, we know Paul knows that he was a sinful man. He accepted Christ. The focus is on what to do to inherit eternal life.

If you remember the first verse, the rich young ruler was saying, what must I do to inherit eternal life? We want to address that question. What must I do?

That's kind of like a work. So he said he's kept all these things from his youth on up. That's quite a statement to make. That's quite a statement to make.

And looking at him, Jesus loved him. And said to him, one thing you lack. Go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven.

[16:20] And come, follow me. But at these words, he was saddened, and he went away grieving, for he was one who owned much property. Verse, verse there.

And Jesus loved him. Gave him affection. That's his mission, is to love and save the lost on this earth. We know that.

Here's a man that was wrapped up in himself and his money and his wealth. That's where he was wrong. He was an idolater of his money.

But Jesus loved him. Guy wrapped up in all that stuff, and Jesus loved him. What were you wrapped up with? It's one of the reasons why I wanted you to think about when you became a Christian.

What were you wrapped up in when Jesus came to you and loved you? What was your idolatry? It's good to, that's one thing to remember. We don't want to remember all our sins and all the bad stuff.

[17:22] God saved our souls. And that's amazing. This love, this is agape love. It's called agape love. Unconditional love for this rich young ruler.

It's amazing. If you go back to Mark there, chapter 10, we did not cover this story last time, but starting in verse 13, it's about little children.

There's an interesting contrast between the story before and this story. I think it's well to note. And I'm going to read it. Verse 13, chapter 10 there.

And they were bringing children to him so that he might touch them, but the disciples rebuked them.

But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, Permit the children to come to me.

Do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all.

[18:22] And he took them in his arms and began blessing them, laying hands on him. This story is about children that had nothing, that have nothing, but they have the kingdom of God.

This story is about a man that has everything, does not have the kingdom of God. It's an interesting contrast. Interesting contrast.

His idolatry towards money and his wealth, he couldn't part with it. His other God, he couldn't part with it. He went away saddening.

His money. He needed to repent, turn from that, accept Christ for forgiveness of sins, follow Jesus. It wasn't the physical act of giving his money away that mattered.

It was his repenting heart is what really mattered. Do you remember the story about Zacchaeus? Zacchaeus, do you all remember the story about Zacchaeus? I'm going to summarize it briefly.

[19:24] Zacchaeus was a rich tax collector, another rich man. There's good stories about rich people in this scripture here. He went up a tree or somewhere to see Jesus coming by, and Jesus saw him up there.

Zacchaeus, I want to go to your home. He goes to Zacchaeus' home. And what does Zacchaeus say? I'm going to give half of my wealth away to the poor and anyone I've defrauded.

We saw that. I'm going to give four times what I defrauded them. And at the end of that story, it says salvation has come to this house.

See, he repented from his God, false God, accepting Christ. Christ, we know for sure that only Christ can help us with that.

This rich young ruler was standing on his own merits, and it needed to change. When we come to Christ, we can't stand on any of our merits. It's impossible. It's impossible.

[20:27] And little does this rich young ruler know the abundance he could have had, far exceeding any wealth that he had. He didn't know that.

That's why we've got to pause for a minute and not be sulk about things in life. We have an abundant life. We have it right now if you've accepted Christ. We have the Holy Spirit living in us.

That's the most amazing thing I could ever even imagine. To help us in our walk with God. Little did he know. And lastly, we see he walks away sad.

But at these words, he was saddened, and he went away grieving. He chose the wrong path, clearly. I would like to hope, and again, I have no idea what happened to this man. Some day down the road, maybe he gets older, maybe he could come back and look at this seed that Jesus put in his heart, and maybe he became a Christian. I don't know that.

[21 : 34] That's only speculation. I have no idea. I do know that we're called to plant seeds in people's hearts, and they always say you get lots of no's, lots of reasons for no, but we don't know what that seed's going to do.

And Jesus, looking around, said to his disciples, He left.

He walked away. This is sad. Very sad. He's walking away from the kingdom of God. I love this, where it starts out, Jesus looking around.

Back on verse 21, Jesus looking at him. This humanity of Jesus, looking around. That's really, he's looking around at his disciples.

That just encourages me, his love for the disciples. He's taking great care to see everyone. Really important thing. Another thing in my teaching, I try to look everywhere.

[23 : 05] We're all important, right? Looking around his humanity. How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God.

It's a huge, huge stumbling block for many people, the wealth. But not everyone. There's another verse, if you could look up with me. Matthew, book of Matthew, chapter 27.

Matthew, verse 57.

Now when it was evening, there came a rich man. A rich man. A Marathia. Named Joseph. Who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus.

So it's not impossible. Anyone can come to know the Lord. There's a rich man that come to know the Lord. He's a disciple of Jesus. That gives me encouragement.

[24 : 12] All people groups need the Lord. Every people group needs the Lord. I will say this. A poor person probably doesn't have a barrier of wealth to come to know the Lord.

We can probably say that pretty confidently. Each people group have their own barriers of coming to know the Lord. And it said there, verse 24, and the disciples were amazed at his words.

They were amazed. They're, they're, I don't think they're still getting it. They're still having a hard time understanding this impossible of man, but possible of God.

Who can get in? You know, they're struggling with this. This, and the eye of a, a camel going through an eye of a needle. That's quite of interest. It's a, it's a hyperbole, I believe.

It's just a kind of an exaggeration just to show that the impossibility of it. A camel going through an eye of a needle. You can't put a rope through an eye of a needle even. Just can't be done. It's impossible.

[25 : 21] The camel is the man's wealth. It's just keeping them from coming to know Christ. It's impossible. Jesus is just making it clear. He's making it crystal clear.

We cannot come to know him apart from him. It's him. It's faith in him. There's no good work, no commandment.

It's impossible that route. It has to be him by faith. Accepting Christ for forgiveness of our sins.

Continue the story.

And they were even more astonished, saying to him, Then who can be saved? Here he is the third time looking at them. He's looking at them.

Jesus says, With people is it impossible, but not with God, for all things are possible with God. So, in kind of an odd way, the disciples have a little bit of a similar reaction as the rich man.

[26 : 24] Like, how can this be? This doesn't make sense. Jesus is making it clear. Jesus looking at them.

Really, really important to look at people when we talk to people. The question reveals the hopelessness of human efforts. Hopeless. Our efforts to have eternal life is hopeless.

And they're having a hard time understanding this. And it's the same hard time we have today. I've talked with numerous people over the years. That concept, it just somehow people think, maybe it's more in Dubuque, I don't know.

Maybe it's more in certain religion groups, I don't know. But people thinking they can work their way to heaven, it's not possible. Doing good things. It just seems hard for them to understand.

It's a hard concept. We have to help make it clear to them. We have to share with them, share with them the truth. Then why did Jesus have to die on the cross? Because of our sinful nature.

[27 : 33] Remember the, we shared on here, the story of the epileptic, Jesus cured the epileptic son. And the, if you remember the story, the disciples and the father, they were kind of arguing, they couldn't heal him.

They were trying. They're arguing about it. Finally, Jesus comes down the mountain from the transfiguration, and he comes down, and the father goes to the one place he needs to go, and that's Jesus. Disciples had forgotten about that.

He healed the epileptic son. We can't. So it's impossible. It's impossible on our own merits to have Christ.

So let's talk a little bit about the answer to this. This is, this truly is an amazing prophecy. It's so encouraged for me to read this prophecy.

I hope you get encouragement from it too. This just really shows clarity of the answer. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you.

[28 : 35] This is clearly about Jesus, what he's going to do with the cross. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. I will cleanse you from all your uncleanness and from all your idols.

Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you will be careful to do my judgments.

This is the salvation experience when we accept Christ. He is going to cleanse us from our sins. He is going to put a new spirit within us.

He is going to take our old heart out and put a new heart in. He did that to us. That's something.

That's worth remembering. Every day. Remember the joy that the benefits we have right now, hundredfold more than anything we got from wealth.

That's amazing. John 3, 5. Similar. Similar thinking here. And Jesus said, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

[29 : 55] The cleansing from water and the spirit we get. The newness we get from accepting Christ. And the one area I think we sometimes, at least I do, forget to emphasize, it's because of sin.

This is huge, important to remember. Romans 6, 6. Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him in order that our body of sin, this is the reason why he came, our body of sin might be done away with so that we would no longer be slaves to sin.

It is for the sin why he came, why he had to die, why, it's how we get to heaven, it's for forgiveness of our sins. It's not what we do. Not what we do, it's what he did.

What he did on Gethsemane. He died, was crucified, buried, rose again on the third day. The impossible task we could not do, he did.

And it's amazing. It's truly amazing. Verse 27, back on the Ezekiel, Ezekiel, I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and you will be careful to do my judgments.

[31 : 15] That's the awesome benefits we have from God. What man can never do, God alone can do. It's all about God and the Savior.

We simply call on God by faith and ask him to forgive our sins and come into our life. Ephesians, here's another verse about this.

All him, not us. Ephesians 2, 8, and 9, I'm going to read it. For by grace you have been saved through faith and this is not of yourself, it is a gift of God, not by works, so that no one may boast. Let's continue to finish up the story here. Peter began to say to him, Behold, we have left everything and followed you. And Jesus said, Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms for my sake and for the gospel's sake except one who will receive 100 times as much now in the present age.

100 times. We're getting blessed. Houses and brothers and sisters and mothers, children and farms along with persecutions and in the age to come, eternal life.

[32 : 35] Leaving everything to follow Jesus, that does have value, leaving everything to follow Jesus, but it does not get us eternal life or get us into heaven.

Peter, it's funny, you know, Peter's listening to this story, listening to Jesus talk and, Oh, hold on, Jesus, what about me? I left everything to follow you. Right?

They still don't quite get it. Knuckleheads. Knuckleheads. Is that what you call them?

Knuckleheads. I would like to add one adjective to that. Beloved knuckleheads.

So loved knuckleheads. And I'm one of them. And maybe a few of you are too. I'm not going to call you a knucklehead, but maybe you can call yourself that. I'll let you call yourself that.

But we're beloved. Even though these guys don't get it, he still has these guys with him. And we know, we know they're going to do amazing things after his death and resurrection.

[33 : 35] They're going to finally get it and do amazing preaching. So if you're still not getting things, just hang in there. Keep pressing on.

Get to know one another here. Help each other. Teach each other. Courage each other. That's how we're going to continue to do amazing things. Knuckleheads.

Beloved. Beloved. Knuckleheads. There will be persecution, it says in that scripture. Blessings a hundredfold. God's blessing us.

We have to pause and think how he's blessing us. Don't forget those things. You know, when a young couple gets married, they're just so devoted to one another. That's the kind of love that we have, we should have with Christ.

God wants all of us, all of us, not some of us, when we come to know him. He's going to take care of it. He's jealous for our love. He wants all our devotion.

[34 : 38] The camel going through an eye of a needle. It's just not possible. It's just not possible. And if we close, go back and look at this verse again.

Verse 26 and 27, and they were even more astonished, saying to him, then who can be saved? Looking at them, Jesus says, with people is impossible, but not with God.

All things are possible with God. We cannot enter the kingdom of God on our own merits, but it will happen through Jesus and what he did at the cross, accepting him by faith.

Accepting him by faith. Yes, wealth can keep us from going there. It certainly can. It's an obstacle. There's lots of obstacles that people have. It's good to think about that when you're sharing with someone.

What is their obstacle? So you can show them love. Is it power? Is it poor self-esteem? Is it... People have all kinds of obstacles that come to Christ.

[35 : 38] They rest on their own talents. Sports. All kinds of things keep people from coming to know Christ. He wants to come in, give us the new heart.

A new heart. We saw that in Ezekiel. And he did. And it's what a blessing. One last thought is about the wealth. Story about wealth.

Wealth. Sometimes wealth can creep into our hearts and minds after we become Christians. And it can dominate our lives. And we can get sidetracked on building wealth.

And not that wealth in itself is not wrong. Just as long as it's not an idol. It hasn't become your idol in life. So I just close with that.

And just thank you for coming this morning. And I hope God's gonna bless you. I know he is. I'm excited for what he's doing here at Tri-State Community Church.

[36 : 38] I've never been around such a large group of people that love God's word. I'm excited about God's word. It makes this job so much more easier. Working for him. So let's pray.

Thank you, Father, for your greatness, your goodness. You've got a story. Pretty much covers every case. Poor people, wealthy people, the common people.

Lord, you came for all of us. All of us need you. None of us can do it on our own merits. Lord, we just praise you today. Amen.

Amen.