

3. Jesus: “Come Follow Me!”

Mark 10:17-31

A philosopher’s observations...

Around 3000 years ago, a philosopher was trying to discover meaning and purpose in his life. He observed that no matter what he pursued, it was all “*hebel*” – just breath, vapour, fleeting, meaningless. Nothing he accumulated or accomplished would last forever. After his death, all his wealth would be passed to someone else. In time he’d be forgotten.

Several times, the philosopher urges us to enjoy God’s blessings in every season of life:

So I concluded there is nothing better than to be happy and enjoy ourselves as long as we can. And people should eat and drink and enjoy the fruits of their labour, for these are gifts from God. (Ecclesiastes 3:12-13 NLT, see also: 2:24-25, 3:22, 9:7-9, 11:8)

The philosopher also observes: **God has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.** (Ecclesiastes 3:11 NIV) The world is too big for us to comprehend, yet its satisfactions are too small. Since we were made for eternity, the things of this life cannot fully and permanently satisfy us.¹

Share: What thoughts, images or feelings stir within you when you consider the word: **Eternity**
(I invite you to share that with a friendly person near you for a few minutes)

God created humans in his image to do life with him. Since we have the breath of God in us, we have a longing in our hearts to find our place in God’s story and in God’s kingdom. That’s why we humans wonder about our eternal destiny.

A man asks Jesus a question

Around 2000 years ago, a young rich man was wondering about this same thing. In spite of his material security, he was wondering about his eternal security. In spite of living what he thought was a “good life”, he sensed there was something missing. He comes to Jesus to find out what it was: **“Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”** (Mark 10:17 NIV)

It’s a good question. At some point I suspect most of us have wondered:

- What’s going happen to me when I die?
- After the things I’ve done, how can I be sure of being with God after I die?
- What can I do to get into God’s good books – and make it into his heaven?

“What must I do to inherit eternal life?”

Jesus’ response helps this rich young leader reflect on his life in the mirror of God’s Word: **“You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother.’”** (Mark 10:19 NIV)

These commandments are all about loving our.....neighbour.

The young ruler gives himself a big tick! “Yep. I can honestly say I’ve kept these since I was a boy.” And no doubt, in terms of his outward behavior, he had!

Like this chap, we might think we are pretty good people: “I’ve never killed anyone or committed adultery. I don’t steal from others. I don’t lie or rip people off. Ever since I was young, I’ve loved and respected my parents.”

¹ NIV Study Bible, Footnotes on Ecclesiastes 3:11, p. 994.

Jesus gets to the heart

Hmmm, I wonder if the rich young ruler had heard Jesus' *Sermon on the Mount*. Jesus says if you curse someone in anger, you are guilty of murder in your heart (Matt 5:22). Or if you look at another human being with lust, you are guilty of adultery in your heart (Matt 5:27).

I don't know how it is with you, but if a movie was made of my every impure, angry, selfish, or proud thought, and flashed up on the screen here this morning, I'd die of embarrassment.

There's something more fundamental to our relationship with God than just outward behaviour. **It's the focus of your heart.** What is your greatest passion in life? Where do you look for comfort or security? Who or what is your God?

Did you notice which commandments Jesus left out? The first three, starting with THE MOST IMPORTANT ONE OF ALL: **You shall have no other gods.**

In his next statement, Jesus takes the blind fold off this guy so he can see what he is most devoted to in this world.

Jesus looked him hard in the eye - and loved him! He said, "There's one thing left: Go sell whatever you own and give it to the poor. All your wealth will then be heavenly wealth. And come follow me." (Mark 10:21 MSG)

Jesus invites him on a narrow path with a narrow gate – that leads to life. If this rich young ruler wants to have eternal life with God, he will need to repent. He will need to let go of the wealth that has been his idol – and receive the gift of eternal life with Jesus.

The man's face clouded over. This was the last thing he expected to hear, and he walked off with a heavy heart. He was holding on tight to a lot of things, and not about to let go. (Mark 10:22 MSG)

Did Jesus speak the truth in love to this man? YES!
Did this guy need to hear the truth? Absolutely.
Did this guy receive the Truth? No!

That's the tragedy of this encounter. This guy's wealth stopped him from following Jesus. He loved riches more than he loved God. He chose to put his hope in his money rather than in Jesus. His awareness of his choice brought him sorrow rather than joy.

After the man left, Jesus highlights how hard it is for people who have the trappings of wealth and success to enter the kingdom of God: **"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."** (Mark 10:25 NIV)

The camel was the largest animal in Palestine, the eye of a needle was the smallest hole. Jesus nails the point that it is humanly impossible! But not with God!

Salvation is totally the work of God – there's nothing we can DO to earn God's favour or make ourselves fit for eternal life. Only by the grace of God that comes to us through what Jesus has done can we be saved. By the power of God's Holy Spirit, people can overcome their fixation for riches – or any other obsession - and follow Jesus.

Life Application

Jesus knows the thing that is keeping all of us from experiencing life in its fullest. What might that be for us today? What is Jesus asking us to give away?

Wealth was the idol of the rich young ruler. In our consumer culture, it's an idol for many people today.

No matter how rich or poor you are, you can still have your heart bent on having more money, more toys, more properties, more superannuation. Whether we realise it or not, on a global scale, most of us here are the in top 10% of the world's wealthiest.²

The acid test for followers of Jesus is simply this: Is it easy or hard for you to give it away? According to Jesus, we can store up treasures on earth or in heaven. We store up treasures in heaven by giving to those in need.

What might be some other obsessions that prevent us from following Jesus?

Talents or abilities. It might be academic success, or musical prowess, or anything that you're good at. The danger is when we are doing this for our own glory rather than for God's glory.

Looks, style, body image. Social media portrays perfection via digital enhancement – which makes many unhappy with what they see in the mirror. God created you and loves you just the way you are!

Sport – Especially the need to win at all costs. No amount of any sport is going to get you or me a place in heaven. Only Jesus can do that!

Ambition – like sport, the desire to climb to the top can be to dominate rather than to serve others. Sometime we need to ask whether we are pursuing Jesus' goals or our own goals. And the best light to ask that under is the light of eternity.

Pleasure – When we are trying to cram in as many great experiences as we can, or indulging ourselves to the hilt, then we are obsessed with our own appetites – and not the kingdom of God.

Hobbies – When an interest becomes an all-consuming passion, leaving no place for God or serving others in our lives, then it has become an idol.

Others...?

Good News for all

Jesus is the only one who can bring us into eternal life. He did this through the greatest act of love the world has ever seen.

- Jesus kept all the commandments: he loved and obeyed his heavenly Father with unrelenting passion; and he served others with perfect love.
- At the cross, Jesus gave up his perfect life to take the blame for my disobedience and yours, so we can be forgiven and come into God's good books.
- By rising to life again, Jesus conquered death for us, so we can inherit eternal life.

This Good News is for everyone. Jesus loves you! He invites you: "Come, Follow Me!"
What will you do with his invitation?

Eternal life is a reality for all who will accept Jesus' forgiveness and leadership over their lives, and follow him – all the way home.

It's a miracle every time someone lets go of other things so they can do life with Jesus.
Yet this narrow path leads to life to the full; and an eternity of life with God and his people.
May God grant this to us all! Amen? (c.1600)

² To find where you rate, you can type in your income at this site and it will tell you. <https://howrichami.givingwhatwecan.org/how-rich-am-i>. According to the [2018 Global Wealth Report](#) from Credit Suisse Research Institute...A net worth of \$93,170 U.S. [= \$130.00 AUD] is enough to make you richer than 90 percent of people around the world... The institute defines net worth, or "wealth," as "the value of financial assets plus real assets (principally housing) owned by households, minus their debts." Source: <https://www.cnn.com/2018/11/07/how-much-money-you-need-to-be-in-the-richest-10-percent-worldwide.html>