

Having Everything

Text: Mark 10:17-31

In a world obsessed with riches and collecting 'stuff' this encounter of the rich young man and Jesus disturbs us/me.

How do I handle my riches?

Rick Warren (Saddleback Church) says that everything we have is on loan from the Lord, who owns everything. When we die he loans it to someone else.

That puts a different, sobering spin on the things I have.

You know, there is something very likeable about the man in this story.

'Today' devotion book (October 24 2007) puts it this way...

"He was the kind of man that every Jewish mother wanted her daughter to marry...

Respectful, righteous and rich.

I'm guessing the disciples were pretty impressed with him too.

He was the kind of person they would want as a friend...

Someone concerned about the right things

Who came to Jesus looking for answers

Who had the resources to help fund Jesus ministry.

But Jesus instantly exposed this impressive man's divided heart."

His encounter with Jesus is recorded in all three synoptic gospels (Matt, Mark & Luke).

Piece together a bit more about the man.

Matt- tells us he was young.

Luke adds that he was a ruler.

All- say he was wealthy.

What more could a person want? Youth, wealth and power!

Sounds like the ideal person.

He seems to have it all.

But when Jesus does an inventory of his life...

He finds that one important thing is missing.

One very important thing...that would guarantee him eternal life.

I was thinking about this as I was reading another story about Ben Cousins (disgraced AFL footballer)

Here is a guy who has everything...youth, wealth, power and popularity...

But also an incredible emptiness.

We envy people like him until their life unravels...the emptiness exposed.

Brittany Spears is another case in point.

As we look at the passage...please look at your own life.

See what you have,

and see if you have this 'one thing' that makes all the difference in this life and the next.

The first thing we note about the man is his eagerness...

In verse 17 we read that Jesus is on his way...

On his way where? To Jerusalem...where he was to suffer and die (Mark 8:31)

Now a man 'ran' up to Jesus and fell on his knees before him.

He has done away with dignity and falls in the dust at Jesus feet.
He has seen in Jesus something special and he wants to know about it.

Then he throws that interesting question to Jesus...

Beginning with the phrase... 'Good Teacher'.

'Good Teacher, what must I DO to inherit eternal life?' (17)

The man gets straight to the point.

He had been worrying about this for a long time.

He was worried about what would happen to him after he died.

He believed Jesus could tell him what he could do to be sure he would have eternal life.

Though the question is pointed and very personal...

But also notice that Jesus doesn't answer the question immediately.

He begins with a digression on the phrase 'Good Teacher'.

The greeting is unusual...

It was not one used of Rabbis in Jesus day.

'Good' was only ever used when talking about God.

I don't think that he is trying to flatter Jesus...

But I don't think he knew the full implications of what he was saying.

So Jesus challenges the man, stopping him in his tracks...

'Do you realise what you are saying?'

Do you understand what goodness really is?

Do you really understand who I am?

I think the man thought he was good...but probably thought Jesus was better.

Jesus says...forget about trying to be good

Forget about trying to make it to heaven on goodness alone.

There is no-one good except God alone.

Then Jesus goes on to expose the man's false attitude to getting right with God.

The man's question was, 'what must I DO to inherit eternal life.'

That was his greatest mistake...

He thought he could 'do something' to earn eternal life.

He measured obedience and God's pleasure with him on his ability to keep the externals of the law.

This was a common belief among the Jews of Jesus day...
And it is still a view around today.

Talk to the person on the street about going to heaven...
They will talk of the good things they have done.
These good works surely outweigh the bad...
So God has to take them.
(Mrs Scales).
What about me?

Behind this 'good works' approach to salvation is a superficial view of sin, man, the Bible, Jesus Christ and salvation.

We need to be sure that we understand that sin is rebellion against a holy God.
It is not simply an action.
It is an inner attitude that exalts us and defies the living God.
This young man thought he could do a few religious works and settle his account with God.

This is why Jesus starts by looking at the law with the man.
The law is a mirror that shows how dirty we are.
One purpose of the law is to bring the sinner to Christ...
But the law can't save...only grace can do that.

In *verse 19* Jesus unpacks the Law of Moses
"You know the commandments. Don't murder. Don't commit adultery. Don't steal.
Don't give false testimony. Don't defraud. Honour your mother and father."

These are all things that are from the Ten Commandments.
The basic rules given to Moses by God very early in Israel's history.
It is on these basic commandments all of the other laws built.

And so Jesus takes some of these commands and tells them to the guy.
You need to do these things.
And the guy says in *verse 20*, well great, from my youth I have done these things.
As far as his actions were concerned...he was blameless.
But there was a problem in his inward attitude, in his heart that Jesus begins to expose.

Notice that Jesus doesn't challenge him on this...like we probably would.
My kids like to challenge each other on their 'goodness'.
'Yeah right, you did this or said that.'

But look at the reaction of Jesus
He looked at him and loved him.

In other words, there was a lot that was true and real happening in this guy's life.

This guy is coming up with a sincere question.

This guy really wants an answer.

He might have a lot of things messed up in his life, but Jesus loves him.

And so everything we hear that Jesus says now to this man is going to come out love.

Jesus wants this guy to have the kind of relationship that will open up eternal life to him and open up his life now to everything that God can give him.

And so, then we come to verse 21.

Verse 21 is when Jesus says "*one thing you lack, go sell everything you have, give it to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven, then come and follow me.*"

This is where the man comes unstuck.

He may have kept the external commands...but the last one catches him out.

He was covetous...his heart was locked onto his possessions.

The blockage was his great wealth that stood between him and surrender of his life to Christ.

The issue was what comes first?

His possessions were his idol/his god/his security...

So in order to follow Jesus they would have to go.

Giving away all his possessions wouldn't make the man good,

They wouldn't give him eternal life,

but it would enable him to begin to learn to put his trust only in God.

You and I are probably just as wealthy, relatively, as that young man was.

If the Son of God told you to sell your possessions and give all you have to the poor, would you do it?

He only spoke this way to one individual.

But the challenge is the same for all of us who want to follow Jesus.

What do we need to put aside to make sure that Jesus is first?

What would it take that to teach us to put our trust in God above all other things?

Looking at this young man, you could conclude that he had everything...

But we see that he missed out on a living faith in God.

He loved, trusted, worshipped, got his security from his possessions.

Now the challenge given to this young man to sell everything is not directed to everyone who wants to become a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Jesus was addressing the specific needs of this particular person.

Each of us have the challenge to look at the things in our life that keep us from God.

The man went away sad.

The word 'sad' is a little weak...

It actually means 'grieved', the picture is of big storm clouds gathering.

He was walking from the sunshine into the storm.

He wanted salvation on his terms...he went away disappointed.

The disciples were shocked at the Lord's declaration about wealth...

Because most Jews thought that possession of great wealth was a sign of God's special blessing.

In the case of the young ruler...

It robbed him of God's greatest blessing...eternal life.

Today wealth continues to make rich people poor and the first last.

William Weirsbe writes, 'Money is a marvellous servant, but a terrible master. If you possess money, be grateful and use it for God's glory; but if money possesses you, beware!'

Jesus turns to the disciples and says, "***How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!***" (23)

Peter and the disciples are astonished by this encounter and Jesus' words.

It seemed to stand in contrast to what they had always understood: if God blesses you and you are a good person and you follow the commandments, wealth and possessions are a sign of God's pleasure. Why, then, would you not be welcome in the kingdom of God?

(Does that sound familiar? "If I am a pretty good person and I did my best, I think God will let me into heaven.")

Just in case they didn't get it, he repeated himself by quoting a Jewish proverb describing something that was absolutely impossible.

"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." (25)

The camel, being the largest animal in the nearby vicinity, would have great difficulty going through the smallest of small openings.

When I was younger, some suggested that the "eye of the needle" was the name of a gate leading into Jerusalem, so that this was not as big a feat as might be imagined.

Not true. Jesus really means a full size camel and Jesus really means the eye of a needle.

It cannot be done from a human perspective.

There is absolutely nothing we can do to make a camel fit through the eye of a needle.

We can work, we can study, we can try everything
but it does not change the fact that we cannot do it.

Oh, how we want to be able to do it, to prove that we are worthy of being let in!

In *verse 26* we find the disciples even more shocked:

“Then who can be saved?”

If those who have achieved much in life, who have tasted success can't make it to heaven who can?

The answer is crushingly simple...only God can save!

“With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible, with God.”(27)

How is it possible?

It is possible because of what God does.

It is possible because Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem to fulfil the work of the Son of God, redeeming humanity by his death on the cross and resurrection from the dead.

Nothing is impossible with God; in fact, anyone can be saved.

No one can be saved by their own achievements,
no one can insure their own safety by their own wealth or intelligence.

Salvation can't be earned – it can only be received as a gift,

and anyone can receive it as a gift if they are willing to come to God in humility

and admit their need of God, admit their sin and entrust themselves to him.

As Paul wrote: “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.” (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Peter, speaking for the disciples, says, “OK, but what about us?”

We left everything and followed you.” (28)

Yes, how about that?

Jesus response promises the rewards of discipleship.

And Jesus reassured him that because they had put everything else in a secondary place and had followed his call, they were indeed safe.

Following him did not mean they wouldn't face opposition or persecution, and they did;

but they would be repaid a hundredfold for whatever sacrifices they had made.

Even if they suffered, they'd still be safe because God is good.

I pray every day for my children to be safe.

But I don't mean that I never want them to be in risky situations or always be cozy and far away from danger.

What I pray is they will be close to God – safe because he is caring for them, and safe in his embrace whatever happens to them..

So here is the point.

To be in a right relationship with God, you and I have to give up anything that might possibly be more important to us than God, and God alone.

What does the Lord require of me – he requires all of me.

Each of us will have something to give up.

It isn't wrong to try and provide for the uncertainties of the future – of course we should do this.

It isn't wrong to have possessions.

But if these things matter more to us than obedience to God,

if they matter more to us than extending the kingdom of God, then I am lost.

It's easy to see with some people that their career, or their style of living, or their reputation matters to them more than God.

If this rich young ruler walked from Jesus sad and disappointed...

Would you want to be in his shoes?

Do you want what he had? (wealth, power and youth)

But miss out on eternal life?

What instruction is Jesus giving to you today?

Is the wealth in your life (or anything else) keeping you from obedience in any way?

DO you have prized possessions that excite your imagination in ways that push God aside?

Let them go!

In the story from Mark, Jesus tells us two huge things about God and what He is like:

God is good, and nothing is impossible with God.

My guess is that somewhere in your life this week, you're going to need to hang onto these truths. Cling to them, claim them, and don't forget them.

But remember too the great challenge...to follow Jesus.

To truly follow Jesus Christ is to put everything at his disposal.