

**“The Man who walked away” Mark 10:17-31**

**CCH Sermon Sun 27<sup>th</sup> Nov 2022**

v22    **PRAY**

- Today as we continue on our walk through Mark’s gospel,
  - we meet a man who challenges us right to the core
    - “The man who walked away”.
    - Here’s a guy who you might think was a prime candidate for becoming a Christian, yet he walked away sad.
    - So we’re going to see a **challenge** an **encouragement**. And then a **Q**
- I’ve got to say it’s a really shocking and really challenging passage.
  - why would someone then or now walk away from Jesus-
    - the amazing man who is God come to earth
    - the powerful King who the world has been waiting for
    - the loving rescuer who pays our debt for us!
  - Let’s focus carefully on this man together...
- Who might you think would be the kind of person who rejects Jesus and goes away sad?
  - A terrorist, an axe murderer, a politician?!
  - No, it’s **Mr Nice Guy**.
  - You couldn’t find a more impressive guy than this.... Look at v17.
    1. First he’s **Keen**. v17 “a man ran up to him”. In the hot middle eastern sun this guy is so keen to get to Jesus that he runs.
    2. Second he’s **Respectful**. v17 he “fell on his knees before him” and wants Jesus to teach him, “Good teacher”.
    3. Third he’s **spiritual** v17 Unlike so many others who came just to get their bodies fixed by the walking hospital, he’s concerned with his soul and how to get eternal life in heaven.
    4. Fourth he’s **moral**. When Jesus gives a list of some of the 10 commandments, in his eyes he’s kept every one since his youth.
    5. Fifth, In Matthew’s gospel we learn he’s **young**. His whole life is ahead of him. Isn’t he exactly the kind of person the church could do with?
    6. Sixth, Luke tells us he’s a ruler. He’s **influential**. He has a position of influence in society. Handy for the Kingdom.
    7. Seventh, he’s **rich** v27. And before we start tut tutting and pointing to how that was his downfall, **(which it was ... we will come to that)**, riches were considered a sign of God’s blessing in an agrarian society. This guy surely is doing something right.

So he’s got it all. Mr Nice guy. And yet he walks away from Eternal Life.

We better discover why.... v21-22.

- v21 is so tender and wonderful. It's the first of 3 looks from Jesus in our passage. v21a
  - How I would have loved to have seen that look...
    - A look of **knowledge**.
      - Jesus with his X-ray eyes sees into his heart (like he does with us), he knows what's going on behind his morality, the deep motives of his heart.
    - A look of **compassion**.
      - Here's a conscience-stricken man who is so good, and yet he knows there's something missing, and J's heart goes out to him.
    - And no doubt it was a look of **pity**.
      - There's something standing between this man and God which he's never going to be able to give up. **Riches**.
- v21b
  - Here's a man who likes to *have*.
    - He has great **wealth**,
    - a massive bank **balance**,
    - and no doubt he has **great possessions**-
      - the **latest tech**,
      - a **designer wardrobe**,
      - a **house** to die for, filled with all he could possibly want,
        - no doubt every mother was lining up their daughters and pointing them in his direction! Get to know Mr Nice guy!
  - And yet the man who had everything lacked one thing. v21 "One thing you lack"
    - Well he would have pricked his ears up at that...
    - *"Go sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven, then come follow me".*
  - He had so much treasure, but sadly it was the wrong kind.
    - It was earthly treasure, one day in the land fill. And it had taken over.
 

**And he needs to say no to it.**
- And I think this makes sense of the incomplete list of the Ten Commandments in v19.
  - **Murder**- command 6
  - **adultery**- command 7
  - **stealing & defrauding** command 8
  - **false witness** command 9
  - **honouring** parents command 5
- This guy reckoned he had kept all of these, and at least outwardly he may have done
  - But how about the other commandments.
    - How about Commandment 1 *"You shall have no other Gods before me"*.
    - And I wonder about Comm 10 *"Do not covet"* -want what doesn't belong!
- Money was his God, and it is for so many of us today.
  - Whether you have it or don't have it, we all want just a bit more.
    - Because if you have cash you can throw money at a problem
    - You can buy yourself the things to make you who you want to be
    - You can solve the problems that you want to solve.
    - You can comfort yourselves with the things that make you happy.
  - Or can you?

- What if not all that glitters is gold?
- What if the cost of living crisis is teaching us there's something else?
- What if there's better treasure than money?
  - More lasting treasure
  - More wonderful treasure
  - relational treasure with the God of the universe who loves you and wants a relationship with you, who will never leave you or forsake you.
  - and will shower you with undeserved riches in a relationship with HIM!
- ▲ Do you remember Princess Diana, *"there were three in this marriage so it was a bit crowded"*.
- So Jesus calls him to make a radical departure from having money as his God.
  - Take the clothes, tech, houses to ebay and give the cash to the foodbank, and come and follow **me**.
  - He's only saying exactly what he's said so far in this gospel, *"Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me"*
  - And since money and possessions were possessing him, he needs to jettison them to follow Jesus. YOU HAVE TO SAY NO!
- Just to clarify, Jesus is not saying that we've got a kind of salvation purchase to make, the **ultimate black Friday deal**. You pay with your money and you get treasure in heaven. No, in the original (and in the ESV version of the Bible) the two halves of the verse are fused together, not separate sentences *"go sell all that you have and give to the poor, **and** you will have treasure in heaven; **and** come, follow me"*. Treasure is a gift given to those who make the double turn away from other things as their god, to Jesus as their God. He's being invited not to pay for a kind of self-salvation, but rather to empty his hands of all attempts to save himself.
- Nor is Jesus saying that riches are always wrong *per se*.
  - But they were for this guy, and they may be for us.
  - He's just saying what he says elsewhere in the Bible, you can't serve two masters. Matthew 6:24.
- And like this guy, and for all of us, there will be something that threatens to squeeze God out, A rival...
  - a relationship
  - our kids' education
  - home improvements
  - our career
  - our reputation
- And becoming a Christian means realising that Jesus is real, he's the CEO of the universe and so he gets centre stage.
  - But for this guy it was too much.
  - He couldn't do it. He couldn't give up his money.
  - And so he was the man that walked away.
- And I think his sadness tells us that he so wanted Jesus, he wanted the Kingdom, but he didn't want to give up money on the No1 spot. And so he walks away addicted to money.
- As I said This passage has a challenge and an encouragement for us!.
- I've called the challenge:

## 1) THE GENUINE DIFFICULTY OF GIVING THINGS UP FOR JESUS v17-26

- **If you are not a Christian today**, thank you for joining us. Perhaps you've thought about this a lot before, or perhaps you never knew that Jesus calls us to a radical break with the things that compete with him.
- He doesn't want you to give up some money for charity or a bit of your time.
  - He wants your heart!
    - The genuine difficulty of giving things up for Jesus. SAYING NO!
- Ask Alice or Jon, and they will tell you that it's the most wonderful thing in the world.
- But it has big implications.
- It's all or nothing with Jesus.
- Because he really is the CEO of the universe, he has to come first.
- But having him first is always good, because he loves us, he is the servant king who lays down his life for us, and what we leave behind is only what harms us anyway.
- What do you need to give up to follow Jesus?
- **And if you are a Christian**, what threatens your relationship with God?
  - What sucks you in so that your relationship with Jesus suffers?
  - What has come between you that you know you need to give up!
  - What do you find it hard to say no to?
- **The genuine difficulty of giving things up for Jesus.**
- But I wonder if that's quite the right title.
- You see as Jesus discusses the episode privately with his disciples, as he often does, they are shocked. If THIS guy, Mr Nice Guy, who is
  - keen
  - respectful
  - spiritual
  - moral
  - young
  - influential
  - rich
    - walks away, is there any hope for anyone.

### v23-25.

- Now just a word on the camel here. You may have heard the "urban legend" that there was a gate in Jerusalem called the eye of the needle, and camels had to shed their load and stoop down before they could enter. Well unfortunately if you look it up on Wikipedia, it seems it is just a legend. That story has never been found earlier than the 9<sup>th</sup> century, and the gate has never been found!
- Jesus is using a proverb to describe something that is impossible.
  - He's taking the largest commonly known **animal**: a camel
  - and the smallest commonly known **hole**: a needle
  - And I don't think he's suggesting you can liquidise a camel to particles a few microns wide to get it through.
  - He's saying getting a rich person into heaven is like getting a camel through a needle. It's impossible!

So I think we should change the title... (LOOK AT THE SCREEN!)

## 1) THE GENUINE IMPOSSIBILITY OF GIVING THINGS UP FOR JESUS.

- Maybe you now feel the gut-wrenching horror that the disciples are now feeling in v26. *Loss is essential, loss is desirable, loss is necessary. Loss is impossible.*
  - In v24 they were amazed,
  - in v26 they were even more amazed (lit exceedingly astonished).
- If **this guy** walks away sad from Jesus, trapped by his wealth, what hope has any of us got?
- Maybe Christian or non-Christian, you feel the absolute pull of something in your life, and it may not be a bad thing but it threatens to displace God.
- So you want to get rid of it, but it's pull feels like an impossibly strong magnet.
  - Is there a way out?
  - You love Jesus, you are attracted to him, but there's something in your life (for some it's an addiction, for some a relationship, for others riches, for me the slavery of what other people think) ?
- And it feels like an industrial strength magnet that will not let go.
- Well in the last couple of verses there's a wonderful encouragement...
- v27

## 2) THE WONDERFUL POSSIBILITY OF GIVING THINGS UP WITH JESUS

- We have to say no to sin and the idols in our life.
- But we can't do it. Or can we?
- Look carefully at v27
- God is able to do an operation on the human heart so radical,
  - so transformative that we **can** let go of things to follow him.
  - He is the God of the impossible. v27.
- On our own with our own resources we can never do it.
- That's why I've said "**WITH JESUS**". With God's help in Jesus by his Holy Spirit God will give you the ability to turn to him.
  - Throw a stone in the air it comes down dead.
  - Throw a dove in the air and it flies.
    - We need the gift of life.
- This is what we are praying for Isaac. That he says "**no**".
  - That he grows up turning from sin and idolatry.
  - Without that turn away, without that NO he is not a Christian.
- (There is a form of Christianity today which is no Christianity at all.
- It looks and sounds like the real thing but it is dead.
- It cannot say no). Self is still on the throne.
- Why? Because it has never said "**yes**".
- We have to say YES to Jesus.
- We have to ask him to be our Lord and Saviour.
- We have to make a double turn.
  - We turn away from sin and riches
  - by turning TO Jesus.

- The turn from is called **repentance**.
- But the turn to is called **faith**. There in Mark 1:15. K of G at hand.
  - We hear the voice of Jesus call us as we walk in the other direction.
  - And as we turn from we turn to.
- We can only say **no**, if we say **yes** to Jesus, asking him for the miracle.
- The good news is not, “you don’t have to give up your sin”
  - that would be **license**.
    - That’s faith without repentance.
- The good news is not, “you have to give up your sin in your own power”, try hard
  - that would be **legalism**.
    - That’s repentance without faith.
- The good news is, “With God all things are possible”.
  - Jesus is able to do the miracle of helping us make the double turn.
    - **No to sin through yes to him.**

And he’s already helping the disciples to make that.

And Peter whose eyes are beginning to open more and more says v28 “We have left everything to follow you”.

- I wonder if you noticed v24. Jesus addressed his disciples as “Children”. It’s the only place in Mark’s gospel he does it.
  - I think it links us back to what we saw last week. Jesus is addressing his followers as children.
  - in 15 Jesus had some other teaching on the kingdom of God- he said it’s possible, but you have to come like a child. The key word is **receive**.
- If you humble yourself and become that little kid under the Christmas tree again, you abandon all your qualities- keen, respectful, spiritual, moral, young influential, rich,
- And you simply receive.
  - But YOU can’t do it!
  - Jesus has to do it.
- He will give you the help you need.
- There will be difficulties along the way **persecutions**- v30
- But Jesus will more than recoup for what we give up- I think of the way Christians in this church have opened their homes to those who haven’t had them.
- Jesus is offering a gift.
- If the rich man had thought about his question more closely.
- WHAT MUST I DO TO INHERIT
- You don’t do anything to receive an inheritance, someone needs to die.
- And Jesus Christ has died in your place.

- ▲ Can I tell you about someone in whom this miracle has happened?
- There are 100 of them around you today.
- But I want to tell you about a woman who 300 years ago,
  - She's named after our town, though she didn't live here.
  - Selina Countess of Huntingdon.
  - She had extraordinary riches.
  - she hobnobbed with the greatest of society
  - she was born in a castle to a family of earls and baronets
  - And her husband Lord Huntingdon died when he was only 39.
- But she knew this miracle.
  - God had helped her to say no and to say yes.
  - To turn from idols to Jesus Christ
  - And rather than accumulating wealth
  - She gave it away.
- This book Gospel Patrons (subtitled "people whose generosity changed the world") tells of how she partnered with the preachers of the great awakening of the 18<sup>th</sup> century to fill the nation with the gospel and gospel workers.
  - *"What lady Huntingdon and George Whitefield accomplished was truly incalculable" They reached into the unreached places of both England and America where there were no faithful churches and no gospel preachers. Together they persuaded many of England's nobility that God was not a dull idea but a **living saviour** who could be known and felt. In the years before the American colonies became an independent nation, four fifths of Americans had heard George Whitefield preach" (John Rinehart Gospel Patrons p83)*
- Look at the [Gospel Patrons website](#) for some videos of modern-day gospel patrons who are using their money to change the world.
- So a final question; **will we ask for the miracle? v27.**
  - There are things you have **to say no** to.
    - That's true before you become a Christian.
    - That's true after you have become a Christian.
  - But you will never be able to say no,
    - unless you **say yes** to Jesus
    - and look to him for the help.
    - And it's help he loves to give.

Will we ask for the miracle?

**If you are not a Christian**, you may need to do some more thinking about whether you think there is a God there called Jesus who can do miracles. Mark's gospel.

And when you are ready there's a prayer that you can pray in this booklet,

**And if you are.** Will you keep turn to Jesus for the yes to help you to say no?