

Keynotes from Pastor Tim's am Sermon on 7/02/2021

Mini Series – “Making Disciples”

Part 16 - Matthew 19 v 16-30 “When Christ is our God”

All scripture references are taken from the ESV

Matthew 19:16-30 And behold, a man came up to him, saying, “Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?” ¹⁷ And he said to him, “Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments.” ¹⁸ He said to him, “Which ones?” And Jesus said, “You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, ¹⁹ Honour your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” ²⁰ The young man said to him, “All these I have kept. What do I still lack?” ²¹ Jesus said to him, “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” ²² When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. ²³ And Jesus said to his disciples, “Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. ²⁴ Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.” ²⁵ When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, “Who then can be saved?” ²⁶ But Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” ²⁷ Then Peter said in reply, “See, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?” ²⁸ Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. ²⁹ And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life. ³⁰ But many who are first will be last, and the last first.

There is a cost to anything that requires excellence in any field of activity. Athletes consider a gold medal is worth all the sacrifices of time, diet and comfort they have to make to win one. All of us make sacrifices in various ways for rewards in different areas of life – whether it is saving up for something, or spending our time with those we love. We (sometimes sub-consciously) consider whether the reward is worth the cost.

What would you sacrifice to have eternal life?

In this real event from 2000 years ago, that is the question the young man had to face. He was presented with eternal life, but it came at a cost, and he had to decide if the sacrifice he needed to make was worth it for the reward he would gain. It's a narrative that ends in tragedy, but nonetheless it gives us hope.

There are two essential requirements for eternal life, as we can see from this passage.

1. To be perfect as God is perfect

The rich young ruler seeks out Jesus because his soul is troubled. Though deeply religious, his religion hasn't given him any assurance of eternal life, as his question to Jesus in **v16** shows. By the standards of his day, he's a good man (**v20**), having kept the commandments of God as he had been taught. He wants to know what more he must do to secure eternal life for his soul. Jesus answers him in **v17** by referring him to the standard of goodness that is required. Mark's gospel tells us that this reference to the only one who is good means God. (**Mark 10:18** see p4)

The standard of goodness is God himself.

Goodness isn't measured by what people around us are doing, by our own ideas of goodness or even our church rules! **Goodness is measured by the character of God.** We need to know what he is like to find the standard of good. In **vv18-19**, Jesus lists five of the Ten Commandments that deal with how we are to relate to other people, ending with the second most important commandment. He is showing us how the commandments reveal God's character:

- He is not a murderer but the giver of life
- He is not an adulterer but is faithful to his people and always keeps his promises
- He is not a thief but the owner of all things, because he is the one who created all things
- He is not a liar but the one who speaks truth
- He is not one who disrespects authority, but is the final authority in the universe who establishes every
authority structure on earth

As those who are created in his image, we are to be like him so Jesus could say to the young man (and to us) 'If you would enter life, keep the commandments' (v17).

If you and I want to have eternal life then we need to be as good as God

In the Sermon on the Mount (**Matthew ch5** see p4), Jesus shows that what goes on in our heart matters as much as our external actions and tells us 'You therefore must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect' (**Matt 5:48**).

The young man thought he had kept all the commandments, according to his understanding of them, yet he still had no assurance of eternal life (v20). Deep in his soul, he knew he was still not right with a holy and perfect God.

We may try to put ourselves right with God through law-keeping, but we will never keep the law perfectly.

We may not have physically murdered anyone but we have:

- Held grudges and harboured malicious thoughts towards them
- Wished that people were dead and spoken unkindly against them

Jesus shows us the result of this in **Matthew 5:22** (see p4)

We may not have committed adultery but Jesus says everyone who looks at a woman (or a man) with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart (**Matthew 5:28**)

Just on these two commands, we all show ourselves to be law breakers, and the Bible tells us 'whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of it all' (**James 2:10**). Jesus is not promoting eternal life through law-keeping but showing that we are all guilty of breaking the law of God. No amount of trying harder will make us not guilty. It was true for the rich young man, and is true for all who have been born on earth except the one who is the source of our hope. If eternal life depends on being perfect as God is perfect, and we've all failed, we need:

2. To embrace Jesus alone as Lord and Saviour

The young man knows that, despite his best attempts at keeping God's commandments, he still doesn't have assurance of eternal life, yet he is desperate to have it. He seems genuinely concerned about his spiritual condition before a holy God, and is persistent in asking Jesus what the key is. What Jesus says to him will be

costly and painful, exposing his heart and revealing what is keeping him out of the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus tells him if he wants to be perfect (like God) he should go and sell all he possesses (v21 above for full text). Jesus is **not** telling him that he's done pretty well already, and just needs to obey a few more commands to get in!

He is using the law to expose this man's heart

Jesus is using the law to help him see the sin that resides deep in his heart, as evangelism, when handled properly, should do. The law doesn't just reveal the character of God, but also exposes us for the sinners we are.

When Jesus listed what the young man should obey, (vv18-19), he left out the first four and the last of the Ten Commandments – those that speak about how we are to relate to God, where the young man's problem lay.

- You shall have no other gods before me
- You shall not make any idols and worship them
- You shall not take God's name in vain
- You shall remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy
- You shall not covet (that is set your heart on things God hasn't seen fit to give you)

Tellingly, he also left out the first part of the greatest commandment – 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind'. (Matt 22:37), knowing what held the young man's heart.

Jesus could see that it is the young man's riches that are keeping him from entering eternal life. They have become his greatest treasure, his functional god, the thing he is living for and that controls him, taking the place of God.

If he wants eternal life, then he needs to be as good as God and that will only happen:

- as he comes to God and takes God to be his God, forsaking his functional god of riches

- as he comes to the God who took human flesh, the Lord Jesus Christ, accepting him as his God, the one who imputes goodness (righteousness) and works in us to make us holy and fit for life in the kingdom of heaven.

To have the treasure of heaven the young man needs to forsake the treasure of earth

He will have to count the cost. Is it worth giving up his earthly treasure to know Jesus as Lord and Saviour, to be made holy by him, so that he can enjoy him for all eternity? The Bible does not condemn wealth, but shows us that it is a hindrance to eternal life (vv23-24). Jesus also spoke about this in **Matt 6:24** and **Matt 13:22** (see p4).

The young man knew that by coming to Jesus he would have God and the goodness that is required to enter eternal life. He knew that having Jesus meant giving up his earthly wealth (his functional god). He considered the sacrifice too great. With tears in his eyes, he walked away (v22) from eternal life and went back to his earthly treasure.

- The god that had his heart led him to eternal death. There is no record that he ever came back to Jesus.

What is keeping you from coming to Jesus for life? v29 lists some of the things that people have given up to have Christ and eternal life. Any of these can also be functional gods in our lives and stop us coming to Jesus. As examples:

- Your house – are you spending money and time to make your earthly dwelling better, while failing to seek Christ and neglecting your soul and the souls of others?
- Your family – are you saying no to Jesus because you are afraid of what your family and friends might say?

Money, reputation, sports, hobbies, family, friends, TV and media, food, work and education (none of which are necessarily wrong in themselves) can all keep the soul from Jesus and lead to eternal death.

What is keeping you from coming to him?

If you would have eternal life, there is a cost. We must give up those gods and idols that rule our hearts, and take Jesus alone to be our God. This can only happen by a miracle – **v26 With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.** We

can't change our own or anyone else's heart, but God overcomes the reluctance of our hearts to give up our idols by giving us a new heart, one which sees the worth of Christ and treasures him above everything. This is why we pray for the miracle of new birth those who are not yet saved. It is impossible for us - God alone can do it.

For you to treasure Jesus above everything, you must be born again.

- If you are treasuring anything more than Jesus, and you know it is leading you away from him, then cry out to God to give you this new heart – **your eternal life depends on it.**

If you love anything more than you love Jesus, then that thing will keep you from eternal life.

- If you have already come to Jesus for eternal life, and have assurance of that, this is still relevant. All of us need to be constantly evaluating what it is we might treasure more than Jesus. What functional god are we living for? What has more of our heart than Jesus? What do we think we couldn't live without?

Jesus won't share the throne of our heart with anything else and calls us to give up those things that take his place in our affections. He does so out of love for us, because he wants us to find joy in him, both now and for eternity.

Mark 10:18 ¹⁸ And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.

Matthew ch 5 Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.² And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:³ "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.⁴ "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.⁵ "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.⁶ "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.⁷ "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.⁸ "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.⁹ "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons^[a] of God.¹⁰ "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.¹¹ "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.¹³ "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.¹⁴ "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶ In

the same way, let your light shine before others, so that^[b] they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.¹⁷ “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.¹⁸ For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.¹⁹ Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.²⁰ For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.²¹ “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’²² **But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother^[c] will be liable to judgment; whoever insults^[d] his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell^[e] of fire.**²³ So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you,²⁴ leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.²⁵ Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison.²⁶ Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.^[f]²⁷ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’²⁸ **But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.**²⁹ If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell.³⁰ And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.³¹ “It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’³² **But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.**³³ “Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.’³⁴ **But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God,³⁵ or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.³⁶ And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black.³⁷ Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from evil.**³⁸ “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’³⁹ **But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.⁴⁰ And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.⁴¹ And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.⁴² Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.⁴³ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’⁴⁴ **But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,⁴⁵ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the****

same? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? ⁴⁸ **You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.**

Matt 6:24 No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money

Matt 13:22 As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the **deceitfulness of riches choke the word**, and it proves unfruitful. (from the parable of the sower)