

Then Who Can Be Saved?

We all know people who came very close to something extraordinary and yet, in the end, they missed it. That's exactly the story of the man in our text. Let's first notice what happened to him, and then let's notice what we must learn from this event.

Mark 10:17-31

¹⁷ And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" ¹⁸ And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. ¹⁹ 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.'" ²⁰ And he said to him, "Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth." ²¹ And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." ²² Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

²³ And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" ²⁴ And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ 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." ²⁶ And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to him, "Then who can be saved?" ²⁷ Jesus looked at them and said, "With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God." ²⁸ Peter began to say to him, "See, we have left everything and followed you." ²⁹ 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 lands, for my sake and for the gospel, ³⁰ who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life. ³¹ But many who are first will be last, and the last first."

1. The rich will go from first to last (vv. 17-27)

A. This man had many things (v.17)

This man obviously had riches (v. 22) and prestige (Lk.18:18), but from this verse we can also see that he had religious zeal, intellectual training and curiosity, exquisite manners, and high morality. This was a young man (Mt. 19:20) whom we would all be proud to count as a friend.

B. This man lacked one thing (vv. 18-21)

This man lacked Christ. He missed the loving, radical call of Jesus to follow Him. He missed this calling because:

1. He didn't understand the unique goodness of God (18)
2. He didn't understand the depth of his own wickedness (19, 20)
3. He didn't understand the loving, radical call to discipleship (21)

C. This man missed everything (vv. 22-27)

In verse 22 we read that this man "had great possessions," and yet he was also "disheartened" and "sorrowful." All the wealth and privilege in the world cannot substitute for fellowship with Jesus.

Jesus then teaches His disciples that it is impossible for the wealthy, by their merits or efforts, to enter the Kingdom. The disciples are "exceedingly astonished," for they thought, like most people, that the wealthy were obviously blessed by God. But the Kingdom cannot be achieved ("What must I DO....?"); it can only be received ("...whoever does not RECEIVE the kingdom of God like a child..." {Mark 10:15}). In their amazement, the disciples ask, "then who can be saved?" and Jesus explains that no man can save himself; only God can save—and He does!

2. The disciples will go from last to first (vv. 28-31)

- A. We shall receive a hundredfold in this life (28-30a)
- B. We shall receive eternal life (30b)
- C. We shall be “first” (31)

Discussion Questions

1. Surely this rich young man, just a few years earlier, would have been numbered among the children Jesus cherished and blessed in Mark 10:13-16. What happened to him?

2. How can material wealth deaden our souls? What must we do to counteract its power?

3. How do we obtain “the one thing” in our lives? How does Jesus' command to the rich young man in verse 21 apply to us today?

4. What are some ways in which we sometimes wrongly act as though we could achieve eternal life?

5. How have you seen the promises of verses 28-30 fulfilled in your experience?

6. What lessons do we learn from verse 31?

Going Deeper

How have you underestimated the unique goodness of God, the depth of your own wickedness, and the loving, radical calling of Jesus upon your life? How can you restore these truths to your daily outlook in life?

How are you acting as though the most important things in life are the ones you achieve, rather than the ones you receive from God? What must you do to recover your belief in God's way of blessing?