

“How Hard it is to Enter”
Mark 10:23-27
(Preached at Trinity, March 6, 2013)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Last time we began to look at this remarkable account about a young man that came to Christ seeking eternal life. According to the three synoptic Gospels we find that he was wealthy, young, and prominent as well as virtuous.
And he had come to Christ seeking salvation for his soul.
2. As we have seen he erred in his claim of moral virtue – that he had perfectly kept the law of God. He failed to recognize the infinite goodness of God. And he failed to see the corruption of his own heart.
3. Last week we dealt with Jesus' command for the young man to divest himself of his possessions and then to come and follow Him.
 - A. Jesus knew the young man's problem
 1. His material possessions enslaved him - He was in love with his money
 2. He had not really kept the commandments
Did he love God supremely?
 - B. Jesus called him to repentance - Repentance is essential to the Gospel
 - C. He was not willing to follow Christ at all cost - Jesus told him, "Follow Me" **V.21**
 1. He could not follow Christ because he was enslaved by his wealth
 2. The Gospel's demand:
Matthew 16:24-26 NAU - "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. ²⁵ "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. ²⁶ "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"
 3. The young man went away in sorrow. He was sorry he had lost eternal life but not sorry enough to let loose of this life.
4. Once again, Jesus found Himself alone with His disciples, and once again Jesus took the opportunity to teach them concerning the nature of His kingdom.
Mark 10:23 NAU - "And Jesus, looking around, said to His disciples, "How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!"
- I. Jesus takes the opportunity to teach on the danger of a divided heart
Mark 10:24-25 NAU - "Children, how hard 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 man to enter the kingdom of God."

- A. Jesus says it is hard for a rich man to obtain eternal life
1. People have struggled with this absolute statement by Christ. The word “impossible” has been a major stumbling block.
In the 19th century it was popular to preach that the “Needles Eye” was a small gate within the larger double gate in the in the city wall. The image would be of a camel having to kneel down and stripped of all baggage to squeeze through.
R.T. France writes: “There is not the slightest shred of evidence for this identification. This door has not any language been called the needles eye, and it is not so called today.”
 2. We should interpret the needle in **Verse 23** literally – The camel was the largest animal in Palestine. To drive one through the eye of a needle is beyond impossible. In fact Jesus states it in an emphatic sense:. It would be easier for the impossible to occur.
 3. In like manner Jesus is saying that it is impossible for a rich man to maintain his hold on his wealth and find his way into heaven
 - a. Jesus is pointing to the powerful hold our material possessions have upon us
 - b. We cannot hold on to the world with one hand and Christ with the other
John 2:15 – “Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”
- B. The disciples were bewildered at our Lord’s teaching
Mark 10:26 NAU - "They were even more astonished and said to Him, "Then who can be saved?""
1. They were surely considering the Rich Young Ruler’s qualities
Remember, he was young, wealthy, prominent, and most of all virtuous
He came running, kneeled before Christ, made it clear he was seeking eternal life
 2. And they lived in a culture where wealth was considered a sign of God’s blessing.
 3. They concluded, if he can’t be saved then nobody can
- II. Jesus reveals the nature of the Gospel – with men it is impossible
- A. Salvation is all of God
1. Human depravity renders us helpless. At every point man is completely dependent upon God for salvation
John 6:44 NAU - "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day."
 - a. Jesus describes it as hard
"Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God!"
 - b. For those who insist on holding on to their idols He said it is impossible
 - c. Jesus described entering the Kingdom as a narrow way with few able to find it
Matthew 7:14 NAU - "For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it."

- d. No man can enter the Kingdom while still holding firmly to his idols.
 2. We must be born from above
John 3:3 NAU - "Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."
 Jesus is using a play on words – the word “again” is ἀνωθεν can also be translated “from above”
John 19:11 NAU - "You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me to you has *the* greater sin."
 3. Left to ourselves none would be saved, but God can save the worst of sinners
Mark 10:27 NAU - "With people it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God."
 Notice the contrast between people and God
 With people: “impossible”
 With God: “all things are possible”
- B. While salvation is all of God coming to Christ is never a passive activity. God’s sovereign grace never removes human responsibility
1. Some pretend that a person should do nothing—that God will save in His time and we should sit passively and wait.
 - a. We are commanded to turn from our sin
Matthew 3:2 NAU - "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."
 - b. We are commanded to trust the Gospel
Acts 16:31 NAU - "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved"
 2. The one coming to Christ is stirred to the depth of his soul
 The one who comes to Christ comes with all his heart, soul, and strength
Psalms 63:1 – “O God, thou *art* my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is;”
 3. Jesus described the nature of those entering His Kingdom
Matthew 11:12 NAU - "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force."
 Those entering the kingdom come forcefully
 “the violent take it by force”
 “violent” - βιάζω - forceful, violent
 “take it by force” - ἀρπάζω - to seize, carry off by force
 4. Again He describes it in the Gospel of Luke
Luke 16:16 NAU - "The Law and the Prophets *were proclaimed* until John; since that time the gospel of the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it."

5. Coming to Christ demands a great expenditure of energy
Thomas Watson – “The right way to take heaven is by storm; or thus, none get into heaven but violent ones. Though heaven be given to us freely, yet we must contend for it. . . The Christian is resolved, come what will, he will have heaven.”
- D. When a man has a desire to enter the kingdom it becomes his chief work
1. It will never be entered by those who desire to keep one foot in the world
 - a. The Rich Young Ruler wanted eternal life but he did not want Christ
 - b. He wasn’t willing to give up his worldly idols—the things that were most precious to him
Mark 10:22 NAU - "and he went away grieving, for he was one who owned much property."
 2. It will never be entered by those who toy with God.
It is not for weaklings and compromisers
Thomas Watson – “Where there is half a resolution—a will to be saved and a will to follow sin—it is impossible to be violent for heaven.”
 3. The kingdom shall not be won by means of broken resolutions, and hesitant testimonies.
 4. Those coming to Christ always make it their primary concern
Jonathan Edwards – “Besides desires after salvation, there should be an earnest resolution in persons to pursue this good as much as lies in their power. Those who are pressing into the kingdom of God, have a disposition of heart to do everything that is required, and that lies in their power to do, and to continue in it. They have not only earnestness, but steadiness of resolution: they do not seek with a wavering, unsteady heart, by turns or fits, being off and on; but it is the constant bent of their soul, if possible to obtain the kingdom of God.”

Conclusion:

1. It is true that God has chosen some to salvation while leaving the rest to perish in their sin. It is true that Jesus has come to save His people from their sin and that God effectually brings them to Christ for salvation.
John 6:37-39 NAU - "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. ³⁸ "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. ³⁹ "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day."
2. It is true that no one is able to come unless God first works in them.
John 6:65 NAU - "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father.""
3. But it is equally true that God bids all to come. He genuinely offers the Gospel to all.
Notice our text:
Mark 10:21 NAU - "Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, "One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."
 - a. The word for “looking” denotes a searching look. It was not a fleeting glance but true look of compassion. Jesus felt a true love for him and gave a sincere offer, “Come follow Me.”
 - b. He makes the same offer of all of us.