

By Grace, We Have Chosen the Good Way

Mark 10:28-31

Halifax: 17 May 2020 AM

Introduction:

Last week in our sermon series from Mark, we came to a passage that describes an event that greatly troubled Jesus' disciples at the time and that continues to trouble many believers when they read it to this day.

- It is the account of the one that is called *the rich young ruler* that begins in 10:17.
 - He was a fine young man who had become a ruler, a moral man who was successful earnest—the kind of fellow that made his parents proud.
- It was quite remarkable to see how he ran up to Jesus, knelt before Him, called Him good teacher, and asked Him what he must do to inherit eternal life!
 - Most people came to Jesus seeking healing, but this man came for eternal life.
 - Jesus took him to the commandments—some in the second table—and the young man insisted that he had kept these from his youth.
 - Jesus did not challenge him, for it was true as it was with Paul before his conversion that as to the letter of the law, he *had* kept them—he had honoured his parents and he had not murdered or committed adultery.
 - Yet, this young man knew that his obedience was not good enough, because he asked Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life.

Jesus looked at him, not with disgust as a hypocrite, but with tender love and told him to sell all that he had and give it to the poor, and then take up his cross and follow Him!

- That is what he must do to obtain eternal life.
- That was true.
- This man must leave all that he was trusting in—his ability and his goodness and his status and accomplishments—and he must come to Christ and follow Him.
 - Christ alone, not his works, could save him.
 - All his works were not sufficient—he must leave them all and trust in Christ alone.

This young man could not bring himself to do this.

- He had done so much, he had worked so hard, he had accomplished so much.
- Here was his security and his reputation... how could he leave it all behind?
- Mark told us how his countenance fell and how he went away with great sorrow.

It is disturbing to see this fine young man seeking eternal life, walking away without it!

- Jesus looked around at His disciples intensely—they were troubled.
 - But instead of making it easier, Jesus began to speak of how difficult it is for a man like this man to enter His kingdom.
 - Jesus' disciples were even more disturbed—as we are—to hear this.
 - But instead of softening the statement, Jesus intensifies it so as to declare that is impossible for a fine moral upstanding young man like this to be saved...
 - harder than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle!
- Jesus disciples are at the point of despair!

- They say, “Who then can be saved?”
- If a fine young man like this can’t, how could anyone else expect to be saved?

Jesus tells them the wonderful answer—that it can be done by the grace of God!

- Mark 10:27 says: **But Jesus looked at them and said, “With men *it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible.*”**

Jesus is not talking here so much about God’s grace that sent Jesus to die on the cross,

- but He’s talking about the grace that He gives to sinners so that they will come to Jesus for salvation.
 - He’s talking about the grace that enables sinners to do what this man could not do—to cease trusting in what they have done and believe in Jesus.
- This man’s problem was that he could not leave all that he was trusting in and come to Christ like a little child to be saved by Him.
 - Jesus says it is impossible for a man like him to do this.
 - But that with God all things are possible.
 - Not only is God able to cleanse us from our sins when we come to Christ, but He is also able to work in us so that we will come to Christ.
 - That is what this rich man could not do and what no one can do unless God draws us—and Jesus says that God does do this.

These were wonderful words of grace—that even though we are unable to come to Christ, with God it is possible.

- Today, we are going to look at the disciples’ response to these wonderful words of grace and at the assurance that Jesus gives them that they have chosen the good way.
 - We are going to see how a believer responds when he or she hears that with God it is possible for sinners to come to Jesus and receive the blessing they receive.

Listen now as I read this passage to you... our text today in Mark 10:28-31, but I will read from 10:17 to give you the context.

- Pay careful attention because this is the very word of God.

Mark 10:17-31: Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, “Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” ¹⁸ So Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one *is* good but One, *that is*, God. ¹⁹ You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not bear false witness,’ ‘Do not defraud,’ ‘Honor your father and your mother.’ ” ²⁰ And he answered and said to Him, “Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth.” ²¹ Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, “One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you

have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.” ²² But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. ²³ Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, “How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!” ²⁴ And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, “Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches 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.” ²⁶ And they were

greatly astonished, saying among themselves, “Who then can be saved?”²⁷ But Jesus looked at them and said, “With men *it is* impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible.”²⁸ Then Peter began to say to Him, “See, we have left all and followed You.”²⁹ So Jesus answered and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or

wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s,³⁰ who shall 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.”

May the Lord add His blessing to the reading and to the exposition of His Word.

I. As soon as a believer hears of God’s grace, he takes heart because of what God has done in his soul.

- He realises that his coming to Christ was itself the work of God.

A. Jesus’ disciples were on the brink of despair until they heard His words of grace.

1. They saw this fine young man who seemed to be more qualified than any of them were for God’s kingdom...rejected...

- He was more accomplished, smarter, even more moral than they were...
 - He was earnest, he was devoted, he was successful.
 - What a fine disciple he would make.
 - But if even he was unable to do what he must do to be saved...how could anyone?
 - To leave all that he was trusting in, take up his cross, and follow Jesus.
- Only Jesus could save him—but this man could not come to Jesus.
 - Jesus Himself said that was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a man like this to enter His kingdom.

2. That’s why the disciples cry out, “Who then can be saved?”

- Their conclusion was not, “We are so glad that we are not rich,” but rather,
 - If a fine fellow like that cannot enter the kingdom, who can?
 - If he is unable to take up his cross and follow Christ, how can we do it?

➤ And the truth is, no one can come to Jesus. Jesus Himself said that expressly in John 6:44: “**No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him.**”

3. But then his disciples they hear the word of grace: “**With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God, all things are possible.**” That changes everything!

- God is the one who enables us to come to Christ for salvation.
- He is the one who by His Spirit opens our hearts to believe, so that we see how useless our own works are and come to Him to be saved...
 - So that we leave all and take up our cross and follow Christ.
 - So that we see how foolish it would be to cling to our own works when we might have Christ and His blessing.

- This is enabling grace—grace by which God enables sinners to obey the call of the gospel.
 - We are dead in our trespasses and sins.
 - Dead men do not respond to the call of God.
 - They do not respond unless grace enables them—God’s enabling grace—
 - But once He does, you can’t keep them away!
 - They believe—they come—they follow Christ.
 - By grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

B. What encouragement!

1. As soon as Peter hears that it is God’s work, he takes heart...
 - He is lifted up from despair and he says:
 - “See, we have left all and followed you.”
 - He recognises that God has done a work in his soul and in that of his fellow disciples.
 - When you are feeling so unable, so weak and powerless to go on...
 - What can lift up again?
 - When you realise how kind your heavenly Father is and how able and ready He is to impart His grace to you to enable you to go on.
 - Then you clearly perceive, “By grace I can go on—what is not possible with me is possible with God. By His help I have come! By His grace I will go on!”
 - “By God’s grace, I have chosen the good way!”
 - “That’s why I am in Christ today!”
 - “That’s why I am here even when better men than me are not. It is because of grace. That explains it all—it is God’s work. I have come because He has drawn me and I will be kept because He will keep me by His power!”
2. Jesus receives Peter’s assertion.
 - Indeed they had! Indeed they had left all to follow Him!
 - Jesus does not throw cold water on Peter and say,
 - “Oh but Peter, you have only just begun to do that.”
 - Or, “But Peter, your commitment is so weak.”
 - Peter is not boasting here in what he and the other disciples had done in a way of sinful pride... He is boasting in the grace of God.
 - He and his fellow disciples were greatly astonished—overcome with despair: “Who then can be saved?”—when they thought of their own strength and their own resources.
 - When grace was preached, it was then that they said, “Yes! Look! We have left all and followed you.” God has done it.
 - Jesus knew that they had left all and come to follow Him.

- If you have done that, He knows that to.
 - It is all by grace
3. How it refreshes our souls when we see the enabling grace of God.
- The preaching of grace breaks the proudest heart.
 - But it also encourages the most desperate heart.
 - The proudest heart is broken when it receives the message of Jesus that “Without Me you can do nothing.
 - “You won’t even come to Me unless the Father draws you.”
 - That proud self-sufficient heart is humbled and crushed.
 - How wonderful it is—that sinful soul in bondage to sin, by God’s grace becomes a soul that comes to Jesus.
- Jesus not only receives the testimony of those who claim that by grace they have left all and followed Him,
- He also assure us that we have chosen the good way—unlike the rich man.

II. Our Lord first encourages us by telling us what we will have in this world.

- Look at verse 29-30: **So Jesus answered and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s, ³⁰ who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions...”**
- A. A hundredfold in this life?
1. But this does not seem to be true.
 - These men did not gain riches and honour in this world such as they were craving at that time—thrones and wealth and power.
 - What is Jesus talking about?
 - How can He say that they gain a hundred mothers and fathers and a hundred wives—and hundred times the houses and lands *now in this time*?
 - He is not talking about the new heavens and the new earth here because He says “now in this time.”
 2. We have a hundred times as many in this way...
 - a. First, we actually do have more family because we are brought into the family of God.
 - You may remember how Jesus, when charged with lunacy by His mother and brothers, pointed at those who were gathered to hear Him and said,
 - **Mark 3:34-35: “Here are My mother and My brothers! ³⁵ For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother.”**
 - Truly, the family of God is a large family.
 - In saying this, Jesus was in a sense leaving His family for the family of God who have fellowship in doing the will of God.

- Some of His brothers later came to faith, but He makes it clear that His family is the whole church who does the will of God.
 - They fellowship through union with Him by faith and there is a rich bond of love and communion as the recipients of God's grace help each other to walk in His ways.
 - We use all the resources we have to together promote His kingdom, to worship Him, to spread the gospel, to encourage one another, to correct each other when needed, to restore each other, to comfort each other, to teach each other, and to help in every way, the Spirit of God working powerfully in us.
 - We do the will of God together and it builds our bonds of love.
- b. Second, we have this hundredfold blessing now because now that we have come to Christ, all that we have is actually our own.
- As His children, we are no longer taking what is not our own, but we are now enjoying our Father's inheritance and gifts.
 - When we were cut off from God, everything we think we own is not really ours—none of it really belongs to us.
 - But now that we have come to Him, every blessing in this life is a gift from our loving heavenly Father.
 - It makes every crust of bread precious.
 - We give thanks to Him for the abundance of things that we possess and receive them all with thanksgiving.
 - We have them as His gifts to us, entrusted to us, given to us from Him in love to make us glad.
 - They are truly ours as His children.
 - And we enjoy sharing them with all those hundreds of brothers and sisters and with those in need.
 - He gives them to us that we might have the joy of sharing them with each other.
- c. Third, we have all these houses and lands and this great extended family with a heart that is capable of enjoying them.
- No longer are they idols that we desperately crave and try to get more out of than they can give—frustrating us and them.
 - Just ask the people in Hollywood who have everything that most people only dream of having—beauty, fame, adoration, relationships, wealth—yet they are miserable and overdose on drugs.
 - Ask Solomon what it is like to have 1000 women, tremendous wisdom and education, unparalleled wealth, security, beautiful palaces and lands, the best food, honour from all...without God, it is all vanity.
 - As Christ's disciples, we are able to enjoy a crust of bread more than all the riches of the world apart from Christ.

- We find our satisfaction in our Saviour and are secure in our hope so we do not ask too much of our spouse and our children and our possessions—but neither do we become cynical so that we do not delight in them and seek their growth in grace with us.
 - Rather we have what we have with thanksgiving.
 - We truly enjoy what we have without abusing it and getting addicted to it and perverted in our use of it.
- What’s more, our hearts are enlarged to love what we have—both the people in our lives as well as our possessions.
 - We use all to the glory of God.
 - We are able to love our spouse better, to love our children and our parents better as precious gifts from God.
 - We bring glory to God by delighting in these things.
- d. Fourth, we have the things of this world as harbingers of the inheritance that we have in glory.
 - They are like a deposit or a down payment of all that is to come.
 - We know they are only a small taste of the glory that is to come.

B. Jesus adds that we receive this hundredfold blessing in this world **with persecutions**.

1. This is first of all a reality check.
 - Jesus is making it clear that the blessings of this world to which He refers are not what the disciples were dreaming of—that they’d be on thrones in this world with riches and attendants.
 - In this world, they would have much tribulation. They must not expect it to be easy to bear the cross.
 - Their hope is not in the ease that they will have in following Christ, but in the grace that brought them in to start with and that will keep them to the end.
 - That they will be kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed at the last day through days of much affliction.
- But this is not only a reality check.
2. Persecutions are themselves a gift and a blessing in this world.
 - a. When we are persecuted for Christ, it shows that we belong to Him.
 - We are mistreated by those who hate Him.
 - It is so encouraging to know that we are His—and persecution really drives that home to us and deepens the reality of it.
 - b. Closely related to this, it means that we have fellowship with Him.
 - We have fellowship with Him in His sufferings, and He has fellowship with us, considering all attacks against us as attacks against Him.
 - He will avenge and He draws near to us to comfort us and strengthen us and give us renewed hope.
 - c. He also builds us up and refines our souls through persecutions.

- We grow in patience, in character, in assurance and yearning for heaven, in our love for Him as well as our assurance of His love for us.
- d. And on top of all that, He promises a great reward in heaven to those who are persecuted for His sake and the gospel's.

TRANS> So you see what a wonderful exchange it is, even in this world, when we leave the foolish things we trust in and take up our cross to follow Jesus.

- Jesus' disciples are way better off for following Him than they would have been without following Him.
 - Even in this world, they were way better off than the rich man who would not give up his riches to follow Christ.
 - Even though they in one way had less than he does, in another way they had a hundred times more.
- But Jesus does not stop with the blessings that His disciples have now at this time when they leave all to follow Him.

III. He tells them very simply at the end of verse 30 that in the age to come they will have eternal life.

- A. So few words with so much weight—think of it—in the age to come eternal life!
 1. Like Jesus' disciples, we were so deep in our sin that it was not possible for us to even come to Christ for salvation—much less to save ourselves by works.
 - Yet His grace so worked in us that we who believe are able to say, “See, we have left all and followed You.”
 - And now by Him we have eternal life.
 2. Eternal life!
 - a. No more death—we will never be separated from our redeemer—
 - God the Father will be our Father to guide us and care for us forever...
 - God the Son will be our Lord and our righteousness forever...
 - And God the Spirit will keep us and at last perfect us forever...
 - b. Think how long forever is!
 - Think how awful it would be to be cut off forever—consigned to the place of torment—forever.
 - But the promise to us in Christ is of blessing that will never end.
 - c. We will have a delightful provision—we will never hunger or thirst, we will live in a world of perfect love, of constant enrichment—
 - We will live before the face of God, beholding His glory and perfection to the delight of our souls, enjoying Him together.
 - We ourselves will have true devotion and love to each other, and love for God that is not deficient.
 - We will be forever satisfied and forever enchanted with our great God and Saviour.

- This is what He has for us forever.

B. How the tables will be turned.

1. Those who seem to have it all in this world without Christ will have no part in glory.
 - Jesus tells us... verse 31: **But many who are first will be last, and the last first.**
 - That poor rich man who walked away from Jesus may be first in this world, but if does not come to Christ, he will be last of all.
 - Without Christ, he cannot have eternal life—and he knows it. Foolish man, going away with sorrow from the only one who can save him.
 - He will have his part in the lake of fire where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.
- But this phrase—many who are first will be last and the last first—goes farther.
2. It also speaks of reversals in rank among those who do have eternal life.
 - a. It reminds us that even for those who have eternal life, there are many who are first in this world that will be last and vice versa...
 - There is some notable preacher who gets lots of glory, but he is last... and the widow that gave her two mites to the temple treasury will be first.
 - And there with her in the highest place is the honest labourer who with integrity went to work each day to provide a simple home for his family,
 - who prayed honest prayers and gave to those in need when he could with a devoted loving heart...
 - who worshipped God and took comfort in His promises and grace.
 - And there is a young mother that nobody notices much, praying for her children, wiping their runny noses, feeding them and leading them by a godly example and often wishing her life counted for more...
 - She is the first, and the man that was known in the community who served on the boards of several charities and gave great speeches, but treated his wife and children with contempt, is in the lowest place of heaven.
 - He is filled with gratitude to be there because he sees clearly now what he was—and he is so thankful for his Saviour, but that widow and that mother and that honest labourer that no one noticed are in the place of highest honour.
 - b. But let me add that Jesus says *many*, not *all*, who are first will be last; and that many, not all, who are last will be first.
 - We must not fall into the error of envy where we suppose that nobody who is first now will be first then.
 - Indeed, there are those like Job or the Apostle Paul—who had sterling reputations when they were on the earth, who were men of tremendous ability and achievement, and in the case of Job, tremendous wealth...
 - They were first here and they will be first there.
 - It is, in fact, harder to be a godly rich man than a godly poor man.
 - Yet, there will also be those who were lowly in this world, who spoke of God and their deep love for Him,

- but who will be lowly in heaven—their devotion was a show and even an excuse that kept them from serving others.
 - They made a show out of their service and their prayers, but did little in the way of true prayer and true service.
 - This one was lowly on earth and will be lowly in heaven... yet again, if in heaven, filled with gratitude to be there at all and rejoicing in God's justice that has given first place to others who by God's grace were worthy of greater reward.
- c. All will know that what they have, they have by grace alone.
- Like Paul, all will testify: **1Co 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.**
- And that brings us back where we started.
- C. What can you do that you might have eternal life?
- You can look to God and to what He has provided for our salvation.
 - Put your life in hands of your Saviour that He might save you and keep you by His marvellous grace.
 - What you cannot do—make yourself a vessel for His house...
 - He can do and He will do with His skillful, tender hands.
 - You have the blood of Christ to atone for your sins and cleanse you, and the ministry of His Spirit to transform you through the means of grace.
 - Where would we be without His grace?
 - Whether rich or poor, we would be far from Him, without hope and without God in this world.
 - Do you know His grace?
 - Has He broken you from all the foolish things you hold on to that you might come to Christ and be saved?
 - Have you, by His grace, done what without grace would be impossible?
 - Can you say, “See Lord, I have left all to follow you. By grace, I have chosen the good way”?
 - If you can, great is your reward.