

TO INHERIT ETERNAL LIFE

Mark 10:17-31

Key Verse: 10:21b

"Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

Today's passage, Mark 10:17-31, is a story about Jesus and a young man concerning how to inherit eternal life (17-23). It is unusual that the young man was so serious about eternal life instead of about having a girlfriend. Let's think about his problem. The last part of this passage talks about the reward for Christians (24-31).

I. "Go, sell everything you have" (17-23)

First, God alone is good (17-18). Jesus was pressing on his way to Jerusalem to become the Lamb of God for the sin of the world. On the way, a very handsome young man came up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" (17) Jesus did not answer the main point of his question. Instead, Jesus asked him a question. Look at verse 18. "'Why do you call me good?' Jesus answered. 'No one is good--except God alone.'" Jesus' answer to him was incoherent. But Jesus asked this question to teach him that God alone is good. And man is good and evil. No one is good. Here Jesus tacitly implies that he is the Son of God who is good. At the same time, it is important for everybody to know that all men are good and evil. So we must greet others by saying, "Oh, you are very handsome, good and evil boy." If anyone does not see both sides of man, someday he will get into deep trouble. But deep down in our hearts we must know that God alone is good (Ro 8:28).

Second, the young man's agony (17-20). What kind of man was he? Ac-

According to Matthew 19:20, he was a young man. According to Luke 18:18, he was a ruler and very rich. Suffice it to say that this man was the object of envy to many young girls who had hidden marriage problems. He was already a man of standing. He was young. He had honor and great wealth. In the past, the young man thought that if he had money and honor he would be happy. But this young man did not feel that he was honorable. His success and wealth, which should have been his panacea and source of happiness, did not give joy to his soul. They only made his soul dry and moribund. He was desperate in proportion to his success and wealth. He was restless all the time with no obvious reason. He thought that the yuppie dream would make him happy. But he could not buy happiness with money. He could not get respect from others, due to his selfishness. What is worse, he felt that he was going to die at any moment. He tried to make a smile, but after making a plastic smile he fell into heavy depression. His honor as a ruler, obtained through rigorous discipline, was nothing but a piece of paper. Why was he so? Humanly speaking, he has to be happy. But there was a problem. The devil was after him. The devil knew that he was a totally self-centered man. Through the channel of his self-centeredness, the devil dispatched innumerable demons until he was full of demons. This happened when he had everything, but did not have God in his heart. So the devil occupied him. Spiritually speaking, he was not a noble man; he was a demon-possessed man. God gives true happiness and overflowing joy to those who have God in their hearts. They are like trees planted by streams of water (Ps 1:3). But this young man had no God.

Third, go, sell everything you have and give to the poor (21-23). Look at verse 21. "Jesus looked at him and loved him. 'One thing you lack,' he said. 'Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.'" When Jesus looked at him, he was very lovely and sincere. But he did not know God even though he memorized so many books of the law. The young man studied the law of God to climb up the ladder of success. But he did not meet God personally.

These days we see that there are many children from among rich parents. Rich children's parents give them everything. But their children are not happy with the things of the world. Their souls do not find true joy through games and many kinds of activities with their peers. One young man who attended a prestigious university was backed up by his parents until he lacked nothing. But one time he drove around Chicago all night. The next day he lost the meaning of life. Since then he became a mental patient. The young ruler was just like modern American young people.

Jesus knew his problem very deeply. Jesus saw that he was so lovely and promising. But up until now he had lived a selfish life. In order to become a ruler he had to have big money and education. So he lived very selfishly. In order to make money he became a penny-pincher. In order to become a ruler he pretended to be devoted to Judaism. He did everything to satisfy his selfish ambition. Selfishness seems to be a light matter. But selfishness caused the young man to become self-centered, and a man of giant ego. His giant ego was ten times heavier than the cross of mission. He was pressed until he was crushed by his giant ego. He could not breathe properly. Selfishness also caused his inner man to be like a man with leprosy, full of pus and welts. Because of his selfishness, nobody wanted to be around him. He was lonely. Loneliness really ate him up moment by moment.

Jesus knew that his problem was selfishness. So Jesus said, "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven." This does not mean that he should be a genuine beggar. In this verse we learn two things. First, Jesus wanted to help him overcome his selfishness by giving all his possessions to the poor. One old man bought a sofa for \$600 and covered it with vinyl but never sat on it. He only looked at it. He doesn't know that someday it will be sold to the Salvation Army for \$2. In short, the young man was a materialistic man. So Jesus commanded him, "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven" (21b).

What is heavenly treasure? Heavenly treasure is God himself. Heavenly treasure is Jesus himself. Heavenly treasure is the peace of God. Heavenly treasure is the grace of our Lord Jesus. Ultimately, heavenly treasure is eternal life and the kingdom of God. Heavenly treasure never perishes, spoils or fades away. It remains forever. In this way, Jesus wanted to help him overcome his selfishness.

Jesus also said, "Then come, follow me" (21). In the past, he lived a life of "I, my, me." He had no calling from God. He had no mission from God. But Jesus said, "follow me," so that he might learn the life of mission, because the life of mission gives man the meaning of life.

What was his response? Look at verse 22. "At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth." His giant ego was too great to overcome in a short time. So he remained a sad man. Later, he could not inherit eternal life and went to hell.

Let's think about the effect of mammonism and selfishness. Particularly in this generation, money and selfishness, which stem from pragmatism, are important parts of our worldly life. One young man lives in an apartment, paying \$700 a month. He also cannot neglect car payments and the telephone bill and the electric bill. He cannot pay all the bills. So his wife has to work also to pay the bills and maintain a hand-to-mouth existence. He said, "Life is hard, and I gotta be selfish." By the influence of pragmatism, most people are well-trained in selfishness. But according to the chemistry of the Bible, selfishness is like a poisonous serpent. Still, we think that we must be selfish in order to exist in a world of the survival of the fittest. Money is good for food. And selfishness is good for survival. A young man didn't pay two months' rent and he was cast out. We are living in a hard world. But it is good to have God in our hearts before worrying about money and myself. It is because when we depend on God, he pro-

vides all our necessary things. Some people, out of anxiety, want to build up future security and make a lot of money; they fall into anxiety attacks. Some people become like tax collectors because of their selfishness.

But here, the most important thing is, we must have the principle of how to use money and how to control our selfishness. When Jesus said to him, "give to the poor," he was teaching him a basic truth of God. Proverbs 30:8b,9a says, "Give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you." Money is good. But if, because of money, we abandon God, money becomes the root of all sins (1Ti 6:10). In this materialistic society, selfishness is good, but we must think of Jesus. 2 Corinthians 8:9 says, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich." If we do not master the principles that we must love God more than money, and that we must love God more than ourselves, we cannot enjoy the peace of God in our souls. We have to cry day and night because of money and giant ego. Those who do not master this principle cannot see the glorious kingdom of God, where there are no more tears (Rev 21:4).

II. Christian's reward (24-31)

First, all things are possible with God (24-27). The young man looked so lovely and sincere. But he could not accept Jesus' word and sorrowfully scurried away. Jesus worried about his disciples and he looked around and said to them, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!" What was the disciples' response? Verse 24 says, "The disciples were amazed at his words." Then Jesus said to them again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! 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" (24,25). Here Jesus is saying that man's love of money and his selfishness are almost impossible to overcome. It is as difficult as to make a camel go

through the eye of a needle. But if they do not overcome the love of money and selfishness, they cannot enter the kingdom of God. If, because of money and selfishness, one cannot enter the kingdom of God, in fact, he loses everything. At this, the disciples were even more amazed and said to each other, "Who then can be saved?" (26) This reveals that the disciples wanted to be like the young man more than to be like Jesus. They also were frustrated because Jesus seems to be saying that entering the kingdom of God is almost impossible.

The disciples were confused. But Jesus told them the way of salvation. People are crazy for money. People become mental patients because of their selfishness. When we see them objectively, they look like impossible people and we give them up. But look at verse 27. "Jesus looked at them and said, 'With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.'" Man cannot change a lover of money or selfish person. But God can change them, and use them as influential servants of God. There is no despair in God.

Second, Christian reward (28-31). First, suffering. Jesus knew that his disciples had a sense of suffering loss. Look at verse 28. "Peter said to him, 'We have left everything to follow you!'" But Jesus didn't mind about Peter's sentiment and gave him the most encouraging word of God. Look at verses 29,30. "'I tell you the truth,' Jesus replied, 'no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age...'" This verse plainly tells us that if we believe, we lose too much. Recently many Korean missionaries said, "We are doing a losing business." But we cannot agree. When we observe carefully, there are many clear evidences that God blessed missionaries' children; they are getting all A's at school and they are growing with the knowledge of God. Their parents raise them with the word of God. So they grow in the knowledge of God. In this way, God is raising them as very special people. How can missionaries say, "We are doing a losing business"?

At the end of verse 30, we learn that our Christian reward involves persecution. Living in this world, everybody suffers. One young man said, "I am very much wounded," and became bitter because of his life of suffering. But when we suffer for the sake of Christ, persecution makes us strong and refines us like pure gold. 1 Peter 1:6,7 says, "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed." If we are persecuted for Jesus, we come to love Jesus all the more, even if we do not see Jesus. Paul suffered a lot. He was also persecuted a lot. But he said in Romans 8:18, "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us."

Second, eternal life. Christian reward is God himself. Christian reward is the privilege of knowing his one and only Son Jesus Christ our Lord who gives us eternal life through his precious blood. We are rewarded with eternal life through his Son's precious blood on the cross. Those who are not sure about eternal life are all slaves of fatalism and animalism. But those who have eternal life through his Son Jesus Christ are convinced they will inherit the kingdom of God. And they will reign forever with Jesus Christ. 2 Timothy 2:12a says, "if we endure, we will also reign with him."

We should not be afraid of our death someday. We must love Jesus and through him we must inherit eternal life. May God richly bless you to inherit eternal life.