

October 18, 2026 | **No One is Good** | Pastor Eddie Eddy

Mark 10:17-31 New International Version (NIV) The Rich and the Kingdom of God

¹⁷ As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. “Good teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” ¹⁸ “Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone. ¹⁹ You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother.’” ²⁰ “Teacher,” he declared, “all these I have kept since I was a boy.” 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.” ²² At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth. ²³ Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!” ²⁴ The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, “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 someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” ²⁶ The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, “Who then can be saved?” ²⁷ Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.” ²⁸ Then Peter spoke up, “We have left everything to follow you!” ²⁹ “Truly I tell you,” 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 ³⁰ will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. ³¹ But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”

L: This is the word of God for the people of God **P: Thanks be to God.**

“No One Is Good”

Mark 10:17–31

A couple of years ago I attended a seminar on Biblical authority in reference to human sexuality and homosexuality. I have to admit, I was a little tentative about how this subject was going to be presented...but...at the end of the day, I left feeling very enlightened and very empowered. It turned out to be one of the best Bible studies that I have ever been part of...and here is why.

One of the things we did at this seminar was to read the Bible as if we were reading it through different eyes...to read it with an openness to a reality other than our own **life experiences**. I’ll be honest...this is a great exercise for all of us to do as we study and grow in our faith.

Well, as I read the passage each week to prepare the sermon...I try to do just what I learned at that seminar. **PAUSE**

With that mindset, I think when we hear or read this story of the rich man...maybe our first inclination is to see the “rich man” in the story as someone else...someone who...maybe has more money than we do. We tend to perceive him as someone who was extremely wealthy in his day and probably a little bit out of touch with the kind of struggles and challenges that many of us experience in our day-to-day lives.

Also...when **we...as Christians today...** read this story...it seems a little obvious what a **fool** this rich man was. We can see his ignorance. But think about this...what if we read this story as if **we...you and I...are the rich man?**

Because the real truth is, if we think we are **not** the rich man, we may be deceiving ourselves. You and I...we are far wealthier than most of the world’s population. Here in America, even if we don’t consider ourselves wealthy by American standards, compared to much of the world...we are rich.

There is a website that you can go to called Giving What We Can. If you enter your income, it will tell you approximately where you are income-wise compared to the rest of the world.

I did this to give an example of just where we stand as Americans. My salary is public, so I'm not hiding anything here. I also receive my pension from working construction. When I entered our total household income, which includes Jeanie and myself, the calculator put us among a very small percentage of the wealthiest people in the world.

Now...I don't tell you that because I feel rich. Most of us probably don't.

We still have bills. We still look at the price of groceries. We still fill up the gas tank. We still have unexpected expenses. We still look at our bank account and wonder where all that money went.

But the truth remains...compared to much of the world...we are wealthy.

So here's the deal. When we read this story...when we hear Jesus speaking to the rich man...when we realize what Jesus is really addressing here...the **spiritual dilemma of the rich man**...we have to consider the possibility that Jesus isn't just speaking to somebody else.

Jesus is speaking to you and to me. He is exposing the spiritual challenges that you and I face...right along with this rich man.

One of the things that's so alarming about this passage...is what Jesus says about the kingdom of God. He says, "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."

Think about that...

Jesus describes the largest animal commonly known in Palestine...the camel...and he contrasts it with the tiny opening of a needle. In other words...this isn't difficult. **It's impossible.**

The reality for us this morning is this: all of us here, whether we want to believe it or not, are among the wealthy people of the world. And whether we like it or not...we need to see ourselves in this story. And truth be told...Jesus is not painting a very comfortable picture for us. **PAUSE**

If we start to break this passage down, we'll notice that Mark doesn't tell us that this guy is rich right away. We don't learn that until later in the story.

And I think there is something important in that.

His wealth matters...but his money isn't the deepest problem. His deeper problem is that he has built his whole life around **achievement**.

He has learned that if he works hard enough... if he performs well enough...if he follows the rules closely enough...and...if he does the right things...he gets rewarded. And apparently that system has worked pretty well for him.

But now he is trying to bring that same system...or the same metrics that we talked about a couple of weeks ago...into his relationship with God.

He comes running up to Jesus, falls on his knees, and asks: "Good teacher, what must **I do** to inherit eternal life?"

Do you hear it? "Jesus...just tell me what the requirements are. Give me the assignment. Give me the checklist. Tell me what I need to accomplish...and I'll get it done."

But salvation isn't another accomplishment to put on our résumé. In fact, listen carefully to the contradiction in his question. "What must I **do to inherit** eternal life?"

If I understand correctly...you don't normally **earn** an inheritance. You **receive** an inheritance because you belong to the family. And maybe this man doesn't even realize how revealing his question is.

He wants to know what he has to **do**...while Jesus wants him to understand who he needs to **belong to**.

You see...Christianity isn't primarily about checking enough boxes. It's about belonging to Jesus Christ. Jesus tells him, "You know the commandments." And the guy basically says, "I sure do...and I've kept every one of them since I was a young boy."

In essence he says, "Yes sir...I know them so...I am a good boy."

You see, in his first few sentences, this man reveals how he defines life...and he reveals his plan to come out on top. By **being good** and **doing good**.

I'm not even sure he is actually asking Jesus for advice as much as...he is looking for some validation.

Maybe he expects Jesus to say, "You're doing great! Just keep it up!" I think that in his mind...he thinks he's already **stamped his eternity card**. **PAUSE**

Church...I think we have to be careful that we don't allow ourselves to get caught up in that same "we're good people" mentality. Because the truth is...we do it.

"I've never killed anybody." "I try to treat people right."

"I go to church." "I give when I can." "I help people." "I'm basically a good person."

And all of those things may be true. But Jesus calls this man on that mentality right away. He says, "Why do you call me good? No one is good—except God alone."

Jesus is challenging the rich man's entire definition of **goodness**.

The man thinks goodness is something you achieve.

Jesus says goodness belongs to God.

So why does this "good" mentality bother Jesus so much?

In their world, calling someone "good" wasn't simply saying, "You're a nice guy." The word carried the idea of excellence...of having achieved some level of worthiness.

We understand that too. Simone Biles is a **good gymnast** because she has demonstrated extraordinary ability. Tiger Woods is a good golfer. Elon Musk—whether you like him or not—is a successful businessman. Billy Graham was a gifted evangelist.

We use words like "good" to describe achievement. **PAUSE**

And that's the way this man understands his spiritual life. He has done well in life. He has worked hard. He has followed the rules. He has achieved a certain position. So...he assumes that what works in the physical world should also work in the spiritual world.

That's why his question is: "What must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Jesus brings up the commandments because Jesus knows that this is the measuring stick this man has been using his every day of his life.

This guy has staked his eternal future on his ability to keep the rules. So the rich man's equation of life is pretty simple:

- Good people inherit eternal life.
- Keeping the commandments makes me a good person.
- Therefore...if I keep the commandments...I inherit eternal life.

And with seven words Jesus crushes the entire idea of achievement spirituality:

"No one is good—except God alone." **PAUSE**

Think about this for a minute. What is good? How good is good enough? That's the problem with achievement-based spirituality.

Where is the line?

- How much do I have to give?
- How often do I have to attend church?
- How many people do I have to help?
- How many prayers do I have to pray?
- How much Bible do I have to read?

- How many bad things can I do before all my good things no longer outweigh them?
- Where is the bar?

And if salvation depends upon us reaching that bar...how can any of us ever know whether we've done enough? We can't.

And this is where we have to understand the difference between **earning salvation** and **growing in salvation**.

We don't become more acceptable to God because we did a little better today than we did yesterday. We are saved by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

But Church...grace doesn't leave us where it found us.

As we grow closer to Christ, the Holy Spirit continues working on us. Things we once accepted in ourselves...begin to bother us.

Attitudes we once justified begin to change.

Things we once held tightly begin to loosen their grip.

That isn't us **earning** our salvation. That's **sanctifying grace**. That's God continuing to work in us...continuing to shape us...continuing to make us more like Jesus.

PAUSE

And then we come to what I think may be one of the most important lines in this whole story.

Mark tells us: **"Jesus looked at him...and loved him."**

Church...don't miss that. Jesus isn't trying to embarrass this man. Jesus isn't trying to win an argument. Jesus isn't angry with him because he has money.

Jesus loves him. And because Jesus loves him...Jesus tells him the truth.

Sometimes we have this idea that love means telling people what they want to hear. Jesus shows us something different.

Sometimes the most loving thing Jesus can do is put His finger right on that one thing in our lives that we don't want Him touching.

Jesus looks at this man and basically says, "You've done a lot of good things. But there is still something standing between you and complete surrender to me."

"One thing you lack," Jesus says. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. **Then** come...follow me." And maybe that is the question this story asks every one of us this morning:

What is my one thing? What is that one thing that I would have trouble laying down if Jesus said: "Give me that...and follow me"?

- Maybe it's money.
- Maybe it's our possessions.
- Maybe it's our career.
- Maybe it's our pride.
- Maybe it's our reputation.
- Maybe it's our need to be right.
- Maybe it's our need to be in control.
- Maybe it's a relationship.
- Maybe it's resentment we've carried for years.
- Maybe it's simply our belief that we can handle life on our own.
- What is your **one thing**?

PAUSE

We often assume that the man walks away simply because he's greedy. But I think what Jesus asks him to do goes much deeper than money.

Jesus asks him to surrender the very thing that has convinced him that he is secure...successful...accomplished...and “good.”

This man believes that he can accomplish eternal life. So Jesus gives him something he cannot bring himself to do.

Think about it.

He comes to Jesus asking: “What must **I do**?” And Jesus finally brings him to the place where he has to admit: “**I can't.**”

Church...that's the point. He came asking, “What must **I do**?” And Jesus brings him to the place where he discovers: **I can't.**

And only then are we ready to hear the Gospel: “With man this is impossible...but not with God.”

PAUSE

Here is something else about this passage that really stood out to me. Did you notice that Jesus doesn't call the man back? Jesus doesn't chase after him. Jesus doesn't change the requirements.

He doesn't say, “Wait! Maybe I was asking too much. How about half?”

He lets the man walk away. And that should bother us a little. Because Jesus loves him. But Jesus also allows him to choose.

The man came wanting eternal life...but when following Jesus required surrendering the thing he trusted most...he walked away.

And Mark tells us that his face fell and he went away sad because he had great wealth. Then Jesus looks around at His disciples and says:

“How hard it is for the rich 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.”

And the disciples are amazed. Probably shocked. Probably nervous. And quite honestly...maybe we should be too. Because they ask exactly the right question:

“Who then can be saved?”

And that's the question Jesus has been leading them toward the entire time. Because if being good can't save us...If keeping the rules can't save us...If giving enough can't save us...If working hard enough can't save us...If our accomplishments can't save us...Then who can be saved?

Jesus answers:

“With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.”

There it is. That's the Gospel. **You can't save yourself.** And neither can I.

PAUSE

Now let me be clear. Jesus isn't telling us that doing good things doesn't matter. If I give a homeless man a warm meal and a place to stay...that's a good thing.

In fact, it is exactly the kind of thing that we as Christians are called to do. But people who don't believe in Jesus can do good things too.

You don't have to be a Christian to donate money to a hospital.

You don't have to be a Christian to volunteer at a food pantry.

You don't have to be a Christian to help your neighbor.

You don't have to be a Christian to be generous to someone in need.

People who don't believe in God do good things every single day.

So doing good things cannot be what **makes us Christian**.

Here is the difference:

We don't do good things so that Jesus will save us.

We do good things because Jesus has saved us.

That's a huge difference.

Doing good...being obedient...serving others...loving our neighbor...these things are the **fruit** of our relationship with Jesus Christ.

As we grow closer to Jesus through devotion...through worship...through prayer...through reading and applying God's Word...the Holy Spirit changes us.

And as we are changed, our lives begin to look different.

That's sanctifying grace. The good that we do isn't the **cause** of our salvation. It's the **evidence** of what Jesus is doing inside of us.

PAUSE

Church, Jesus isn't telling us to stop doing good.

He's telling us to stop **trusting in the good that we do**.

There's a huge difference.

We don't feed the hungry so God will love us.

We feed the hungry because God already loves us.

We don't serve our neighbor so that someday Jesus will let us into heaven.

We serve our neighbor because Jesus has already changed our heart.

We don't obey God so that we can become His children.

We obey God because, through Jesus Christ, He has made us His children.

That's grace. And that's what this rich man couldn't understand.

He came to Jesus asking:

"What else do I need to do?"

And Jesus showed him that eventually every one of us reaches the end of what **I can do**.

My goodness isn't enough. My generosity isn't enough. My church attendance isn't enough. My giving isn't enough. My service isn't enough. My résumé isn't enough.

I am not enough. And that sounds like bad news...

Until we hear Jesus say:

"With man this is impossible...but not with God. All things are possible with God."

There is the Good News.

You cannot earn what God has already decided to give you by grace.

So maybe the question this morning isn't:

"Am I a good person?"

Maybe the question is:

“Do I belong to Jesus?”

And maybe there is one more question we need to take home with us:

“What is the one thing I am still holding onto that keeps me from completely following Him?”

Because Jesus was right.

On our own...

No One Is Good.

But thanks be to God...

we don't have to save ourselves.

Jesus has already done what we could never do.

To God be the glory.

Amen.

Invitation to the offering

Jesus reminds us today that our giving does not earn us a place in the Kingdom of God. We don't give so that God will love us more, and we don't give to prove that we are good enough. We give because God has already been so good to us.

Our offering is one of the ways we loosen our grip on the things of this world and say, “Jesus, I trust you more than I trust what I have.” So as we give today, let it be more than an offering from our pockets. Let it be an offering from our hearts...a response of gratitude for the grace we could never earn and the salvation we could never accomplish on our own.

Let us give generously and joyfully to the work of Jesus Christ and His Kingdom.

Closing Prayer

Gracious God, we thank you that our salvation does not depend upon how good we are, how much we accomplish, or whether we can somehow prove ourselves worthy of your love. What is impossible for us is possible through you, and what we could never earn, you have freely offered to us through Jesus Christ.

Lord, as we leave this place today, help us to examine our hearts. Show us those things we still hold too tightly...our possessions, our pride, our need for control, our accomplishments, or anything else that keeps us from completely following you. Give us the courage to loosen our grip and trust you.

We also dedicate to you the gifts that have been given today. Take these offerings and use them to feed the hungry, care for those in need, share the Gospel, make disciples, and build your Kingdom. And Lord, don't just receive what we have placed in the offering...receive **us**. Take our hands and use them. Take our voices and speak through them. Take our lives and make them an offering to you.

Send us from this place not trying to prove that we are good enough, but trusting in the grace of Jesus Christ and living lives that show the world what that grace can do.

In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.