

Mark 10:13-31
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Lynchburg, Virginia

EXHORDIUM

We need to remember the context of the beginning of this chapter. The Pharisees come and ask Jesus a question about divorce, trying to trap Jesus. Jesus takes them back to school.

It is interesting how many times the Pharisees approach Jesus and He rebukes them and then on the very next instant He is teaching His disciples something similar and encouraging them not to act like the Pharisees. This pattern recurs many times.

In the remainder of Mark 10, Jesus continues to teach about the nature of the Kingdom, His own character and the need to be like children. The Pharisees clearly do not get this but His own disciples barely get it. The difference between the Pharisees and Jesus's disciples, is that the Pharisees do not respond positively to Jesus's teaching. The disciples are confronted by Jesus and then change their tune. Jesus is patient with them and keeps on teaching them.

EXEGESIS

¹³**And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and *his* disciples rebuked those that brought *them*.**

The people understand that Jesus can touch and bless their children. They come to Jesus in faith. It is interesting what the disciples are thinking here. Perhaps they thought Jesus was too busy to be bothered with children. Or, maybe they thought it unimportant for Jesus to bless the children?

The disciples find fault with the people that bring their children but Jesus finds fault with His disciples.

Before we condemn the disciples, we should think about this. If we went to see some great evangelist or Christian preacher, would we be annoyed if the throngs of people wanted the man to touch and pray for their children? We might prefer to have ourselves blessed by his teaching rather than have others blessed by his prayers. The reason for this annoyance is that we do not believe in the blessing, in the prayers. We do not think it actually does anything. We should be taught by what Jesus says and does here.

¹⁴But when Jesus saw *it*, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.

Jesus was much displeased with His disciples. In the few instances in the Scriptures when we get this sort of a strong statement about Jesus's anger or displeasure towards His own disciples, it often involves their unwillingness to help children. Somehow, they continue to act like the Pharisees, even when Jesus has just put the Pharisees in their place. We tend to agree with the way Jesus treats His disciples. We think they deserve His admonitions. And they do. But when we think this way, we become judges of the disciples, identifying with Jesus. It is true that we are to be like Jesus. Jesus is teaching His own disciples to think and act like Him. However, the reality is that we do identify with Jesus as much as we think we do. We are much more like the disciples than we are like Jesus. This is a reality and it means that we need to learn the lessons and change our behaviors so that we act like Jesus.

Jesus says, "Do not forbid little children to come to me because the Kingdom of God is made up of little children." We should understand what Jesus is saying. He makes it explicit in the following verses. He says that we need to receive the Kingdom of God the way little children receive the Kingdom of God.

Why is this important? It is important because we tend to spiritualize Jesus's comments and make the application before we have got the foundational principle. When Jesus says that the Kingdom of God is made up of little children, we think that it is made up immature people or people who have a childlike faith, or people of a particular kind of innocence. That is people who can trust Jesus the way that children tend to trust their parents.

And I readily grant that Mark makes this application in the following verses. He is encouraging the rich young ruler to have a childlike faith in Him. At the end of the chapter, blind Bartemaus is one who has a childlike faith. So, it is true that we ought to be like children when we approach belief in Jesus.

However, that is not the only thing Jesus is saying here. He says that little children, like the ones being carried to Him, populate the Kingdom of God.

¹⁵Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. ¹⁶And he took them up in his arms, put *his* hands upon them, and blessed them.

Whoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child receives the kingdom of God, shall not enter the kingdom of God. Little children receive the Kingdom of God and big children need to learn that lesson. It is not intellect, or as we see in the following verses, riches, that receive Christ. It is faith, faith like the faith of a little child, the faith of an infant.

Jesus blesses the infants. He takes them in His arms, touches them and prays for them.

We need to be taught the same lesson that Jesus teaches His disciples. It is actually harder to get into the Kingdom of God if you are smarter, older, richer, well-educated. Don't we see this all the time. The famous, rich, smart, connected people are not the people who generally and in abundance make up God's Kingdom. Why do we keep pursuing them, or trying to be rich, smart, famous or well connected ourselves? We need to be more like children. We need to simply believe that Jesus is Lord. We need to trust our Heavenly Father as the One who has our best interests at heart. We need to walk in the Holy Spirit, simply following God and doing that which we know is right.

Should we read books, seek deep theology, work hard to provide for our families and try to have deep and wide influence in the surrounding culture? Yes, we should do all of these things. But until we learn to act more like children, these things will make it harder for us to be faithful, not easier. We really have things backwards.

¹⁷And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?

¹⁸And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? *there is none good but one, that is, God.*

Only God is good. I am good. I am God. Oh, and you already know what to do. Just do that.

¹⁹Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother.

Here's the law. You know what God requires of you. Just do that and you will be saved. Jesus says this knowing that the man still lacks something. Initially, He does not help the man in His spiritual condition. He pours more salt on his wound.

²⁰And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.

The young man knows that his problem is not that he has done that which he should not have done. He has not done what he should have done. Somehow he has become a slave of his possessions.

This is not childlike. Although children do tend to be selfish, small children do not tend to get caught up in their possessions as an identity. Also, they do not think much about things. They have them today and they are gone tomorrow. They tend to live more for the moment. The Bible calls us to plan for the future. We should save for our children and leave them an inheritance. At the same time, the Bible encourages us not to worry about our possessions. We are to pray each day for our daily bread. Each day has enough trouble of its own. We should say, "If the Lord will, we do to such and such a place and make a profit." God wants us to trust in Him and not in our riches. But riches make us comfortable and tend to cause us to not trust in God. The faithful but financially successful Christian should not be surprised to find God discipline him in the area of finances. If you desire to be obedient to God but do not have the maturity and godliness to withstand being rich, then God will be faithful to you and give you financial trouble. I'd rather have no money and enter into the kingdom of God than be loaded in hell.

²¹Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him,

This man is not far from the kingdom. When Jesus beholds him and loves him, we should get some sense of what is going on. At the end of the story, the man goes away sad and grieved. We do not see him repent. However, due to the love of Jesus, I have confidence that he did repent.

What was it that Jesus saw in him that made him love him? I would suggest the fact that this is a good man, desirous to please God, but who is facing one last struggle. The problem is that that last struggle will keep him from receiving the answer to his question, eternal life in the age to come.

We have experienced this before. You know someone who believes in God, perhaps even honors the Scriptures. They seek to be moral in their behavior. They are not cheats, or liars. They adhere to God's moral code, for the most part, and even seek to be consistent with their own honor and dignity. However, they have one besetting sin they are unwilling to let go.

C.S. Lewis describes this well in the Great Divorce. The travelers are all given the option of staying in heaven, if only they will kill that one sin that keeps them in hell. Only one of the many passengers are willing to do so. They so love that one sin that they will keep it with them in hell, rather than relinquish and go to heaven.

That one sin may be bitterness towards a parent, an idolatrous love of a child, a secret sexual fetish, or the love of money. People who hold onto this one sin have the look of a Christian but their unwillingness to relinquish all to Christ keeps them from His true blessing.

They always have an excuse.

1. One person is bitter at their parents. Instead of letting the wrongs go, forgiving and moving on, they continually remember the wrongs, use them for excuses for their own sinful behavior and blame their parents for their current set of problems. I have seen middle-aged adults who are still bitter and blaming their parents for the sins that they commit in mid-life. Stop already. Confess the bitterness. Forgive.
2. Some parents will not let go of their children. They want to hold them fast, control their lives. In some cases, the children have even forsaken their parents God's way but the parents still act as if the child is their own property, rather than a gift from God. Children are not idols. They are humans. Not only does this hurt you, the parent. It also hurts the child. God will deal with them, especially if they are adults and out of your home. For you, letting them go will be freedom for you and possibly for them as well.
3. Secret sins. For men, a common one is some sexual sin. A woman friend. A business companion. An internet problem. For women, secret sins might be in this area as well. Novels or movies that unrealistically romanticize the marriage relationship can cause you to harbor bitterness towards your husband. This may be because he is not as sensitive as you think he should be. Or, it may be because he has real faults and sins that you will not cover in love or confront and forgive. Some women might also have secret sins of worldliness, pettiness in regards to dress, or the home, or social engagements. But a mind centered on Christ, husband and family will not think and act this way.
4. Finances- We Americans are funny on this one. We think we do not identify with the rich young ruler. He is rich, we think but we are not so. We would not hold onto our possessions like he did. No? What about the tithe. Do you tithe? And by tithe, I mean giving 10% of your increase. If not, you are stealing from God. You are withholding

from God what He requires of you. How can you be a child of God when you will not be obedient with even a small portion of your finances? Are you like the ruler? Are you grieved because tithing means you would have to give a lot?

It is interesting how people tend to think that do not tithe. They give a gift of \$20 or \$50 when someone is in need and they pat themselves on the back. They do this because they think their small gift was sacrificial. They think it was sacrificial because they have convinced themselves that they cannot afford to tithe \$300 or \$400 a month on their \$3000 or \$4000 a month job. But someone who tithes \$300 a month does not pat themselves on the back when they give an amount of \$20 or \$50 over their tithe for a pressing need. They might even feel bad that they could only give \$50. You see, they don't see the tithe as their money. And they are not pinching when they give in the first place. The Lord loves a cheerful giver. He is not pleased with those who have to have their hands pried open to give \$20. Faithful tithers give gladly and desire to give more as the Lord blesses. But people who do not tithe are always calculating how to spend their increase. Faithful tithing produces a cheerful heart that is not clenching when it comes to money. Failure to tithe is a serious spiritual problem that needs to be dealt with by confession, repentance and tithing.

Sabbath Keeping. I would say almost all the same things about Sabbath Keeping as I said about tithing. There are many Christians who do not even go to church. I'll give the Lord my heart but I won't give Him my worship, my time or my fellowship.

One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. ²²And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.

It is quite astonishing that Jesus wants poor men to follow Him instead of rich men.

The young man does not immediately surrender to Jesus. He goes away from Jesus maintaining His possessions. But Jesus had given him an ultimatum. The thing that is keeping you from me is your stuff. You've got to give it up.

The young man knew that Jesus was good. Perhaps he even realized that Jesus was God in the flesh. Judging by Jesus's comment to him, he seemed to know this. Then you would think it would follow that this man would do

anything that God in the flesh told him to do. But that is not what happens. His identity, his security, his trust was in his riches. In short, he had made his riches an idol. In that scenario it is not surprising that God required him to stop worshipping that idol.

This is another absolute claim from Jesus. He categorically tells the man what he needs to do. He does not say, “In my opinion, you are a little too materialistic.” He says, “Sell your stuff, give to the poor and come and follow me.”

That is way more radical than comfortable middle-class Christianity. Jesus demands our all. If we are honest, there is a lot of room for our own repentance. Are we willing to do whatever Jesus requires of us? Are we willing to give up our besetting sins? Is there one thing we lack that keeps us from receiving the life of the age to come? Well, if there is one thing, we must give up that one thing. We must let it be nailed to the cross of Christ, forsaking it and receiving the Lord’s forgiveness.

²³And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! ²⁴And the disciples were astonished at his words.

With great difficulty, the rich enter into the Kingdom of God. Why? Because they have much to risk and are unwilling to risk it. The poor come in easily because they have little to risk and everything to gain. But the rich do not see that in grasping their earthly things, they forfeit heavenly, that is spiritual advantages. Jesus teaches that true spirituality, godliness, virtue, obedience to Christ: these things are of much greater value than the checking account and the retirement balance.

The reality is that all of us here are rich by the majority of the world’s standards. Some of here really are rich. We have everything we need and great abundance above that. Jesus says it is with hardship or difficulty that such people enter into the Kingdom of God. Does this astonish you as it did the disciples.

But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! ²⁵It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

Where is your trust? If you are secure in your provision, trusting in them more than in Christ, then you will have a hard time entering God's Kingdom.

²⁶And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved?

Why were the disciples astonished out of measure? They were seeking a different kind of Kingdom than the one that Jesus was inaugurating. They wanted a kingdom like the other kingdoms. Jesus's kingdom ran on different principles. Their ideal was a kingdom of power by might. Jesus's kingdom was one of rule through service.

²⁷And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men *it is impossible*, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.

God can and does change hearts. Even the young ruler can have his heart and attitude changed. The truth can be revealed to him such that he is given faith to give up that which he thinks he needs to hold onto.

²⁸Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee.

Peter wants validation and Jesus gives it to him. Perhaps Peter's thought at this point was something like, "We have invested all that we used to have in your kingdom. You will remember us and reward us, won't you Jesus?"

²⁹And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, ³⁰But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions;

In this time, we shall receive tremendous benefit from giving up those things that seemed essential. We shall receive a place to stay, family, a promised land, and trouble with it, persecutions.

and in the world to come eternal life. ³¹But many *that are first* shall be last; and the last first.

And in the coming age, life eternal. This is not just the hope of heaven after death but it includes that. It has to do with receiving God's Kingdom and the life that only God can give.

EXHORTATION

One thing thou lackest.

Take up the cross and follow Jesus.