



Sermon, Sunday October 20, 2024 "The Rich and the Kingdom of God"

SCRIPTURE: Mark 10:17-22 ¹⁷ As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" ¹⁸ Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. ¹⁹ You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness. You shall not defraud. Honor your father and mother.' " ²⁰ He said to him, "Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth." ²¹ Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." ²² When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

Introduction: Questions About Eternal Life

Today is the 22nd Sunday after Pentecost. According to verse 17 of today's text, someone came to Jesus and asked, '**Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?**' This man does not tell Jesus who he is or where he is from but asks Jesus a direct question.

'**Eternal life**', is a key topic in the New Testament. In Chapter 3 of the Gospel of John, there is a conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus. During his conversation, Jesus mentions eternal life several times. "**That everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.**" (John 3:15-16) During a debate with the Jews, Jesus said, "**I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.**" (John 10:28). Furthermore, in the process of raising Lazarus from the dead, Jesus said this to Martha: "**And whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?**" (John 11:26)

According to today's text, the person who came to Jesus and asked the question about eternal life lived his life faithfully. However, he was not satisfied with that alone and worried about the ultimate problem of life. He receives answers to his question from Jesus.

Body: Jesus' answer

First, Jesus mentions the Ten Commandments in today's text 10:19, saying, "**You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honor your father and mother.**"

Jesus did not mention, however, the things that must be observed in a relationship with God in the Ten Commandments, but only mentioned six specific items that must be observed in relationships between people. To Jesus' comment, this man replies, "**Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth.**"

We do not know how truly he kept the commandments, but he lived an exemplary life by the standards of his time. If there are many people like this, society will be healthy. However, a moral and exemplary life alone does not enrich a person's soul. If this person had lived with the abundance of his soul, he would not have sought Jesus.

What kind of person is this person who appears in today's text in our society today? This person will be praised by family, friends, and neighbors. This person might be someone who graduated from an ivy league



university in the East and rose to a high-level position in government or a large corporation. This person may be a respected doctor, judge, college professor, or priest. Many people in the world look only at their qualifications and standard of living and envy their successful lives.

Human life is essentially no different from a socially successful person or an ordinary person. Even socially successful people feel lonely, experience the futility of life, feel anxious about their lives, and are frustrated in the face of their constant desire to elevate themselves.

According to verse 21 of today's text, when Jesus saw this man who said, **'I have kept all these since my youth.'** he said, **'loved him.'**

As you can see from this verse, living faithfully is not easy, so Jesus found the man special.

Rather than ending his conversation with him with praise, however, Jesus commands him to give up his possessions. In verse 21 of the text, Jesus says, **'You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.'**

This request of Jesus is perplexing to this man who has lived a sincere and exemplary life. This man came to Jesus hoping that he would be able to solve his inner problems, but instead he ended up being tested. Jesus mentioned this man's greatest weakness: wealth, which in the end, is revealed what this person absolutely relied on.

After the man left, Jesus said to his disciples in Mark 10:23: **"How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!"**

People outside the church say that Jesus' words are nothing more than religious rhetoric or the self-justification of people who have not become rich.

How should we accept Jesus' words that we cannot serve both God and money? In Matthew 6:24, the word **'serve'** means to regard something as an absolute object. If we serve God as an absolute object, nothing else can be an absolute object. In other words, a person who regards wealth as an absolute object cannot serve God as an absolute object.

I believe that it is a matter for each individual to choose how much wealth is allowed for Christians living in today's capitalist system. Ancient Jews also struggled with this problem. **Proverbs 30:8 says: "Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches but give me only my daily bread."** Additionally, in **Proverbs 30:9, he prayed, Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the LORD?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God.'** Since we are influenced by wealth throughout our lives, we must not stop reflecting on ourselves until we die.

As a result, according to today's text, this man who came to Jesus returned with a sad look. In fact, this person in today's text is quite an exemplary and godly person. He tried to live righteously according to the standards of the time, and he was interested in eternal life. However, he collapsed at a critical moment.

Jesus said in **Mark 10:25, '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.'** The meaning of this verse is that the kingdom of God is only granted to those who are completely immersed in God's rule and reign. That's why Jesus gave us a very unrealistic-sounding command: to sell all our possessions. Jesus gave this command because he cared about this man. If Jesus had not spared him, he would not have said this.

Conclusion: Christians who live focused on the kingdom of God

Christians are people who do not simply keep the Ten Commandments but focus on living the kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus. This is living without a place of false piety and hypocrisy to show off to others.



So, Jesus spoke in the text as if urging us to give up the things that hinder our lives. In fact, people think that these words of Jesus are excessive and unrealistic. Just as the man in today's text looked sad and worried and left Jesus, people also stay away from Jesus' words.

We pursue fame, power, and wealth in the name of success throughout our lives, and one day, will all leave us without exception. Isn't it a wise and realistic way to live if we focus on the kingdom of God (eternal life)?

If we do not completely change our thoughts about life, eternal life may not enter our eyes and hearts until we die. Please don't forget! Our lives are not designed and created by us, but received as a gift from God, who created the world from nothing and will perfect it. So Jesus said that the kingdom of God is at hand. Are you thinking of completely changing the direction of your life toward eternal life and the kingdom of God, which points to the depth and mystery of life? I hope that Jesus' invitation in today's text does not cause us worry, but joy. **Amen!**

