

Mark 10:1-31
January 14, 2024

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: How would you describe our culture's current view on marriage and divorce? How is this impacting the family unit and young children? [Let people engage]

Transition: Sometimes even Christians can lapse into thinking that Jesus is a nice "addition" to our lives and that He makes things a little bit better, but nothing could be further from the truth. Today Jesus is going to go into three areas of our lives and turn things completely upside down. Even worse, these are the three critical areas. You don't get any more personal than marriage, money, and our view of other people. So let's look at this passage as simply as we can this morning, and let's look at three things: our culture's story, the Kingdom story, and how we can make the switch. Let's begin.

BOOK:

Divorce

10 Jesus then left that place and went into the region of Judea and across the Jordan. Again, crowds of people came to him, and as was his custom, he taught them.

² Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?"

³ "What did Moses command you?" he replied.

⁴ They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away."

⁵ "It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law," Jesus replied. ⁶ "But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.' (Gen 1:27) ⁷ 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, ⁸ and the two will become one flesh.' (Gen 2:24) So they are no longer two, but one. ⁹ Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

¹⁰ When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this. ¹¹ He answered, "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. ¹² And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery."

The Little Children and Jesus

¹³ People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴ When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. ¹⁵ I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." ¹⁶ And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.

The Rich Young Man

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: 'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.' (Ex 20:12-16; Deut 5:16-20)"

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 (Ex 20:12-16; Deut 5:16-20) 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 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 Peter said to him, “We have left everything to follow you!”

²⁹ “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 ³⁰ will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life. ³¹ But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn’t understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

The rich man’s problem was not wealth per se but the failure to trust that God—not wealth—was the only good and that God’s radical call to discipleship was for his own good. Only radical trust in God’s goodness makes possible abandoning wealth and following Jesus in the way of the cross. Such absolute trust in God’s goodness that is the prerequisite for entering the kingdom is impossible without a work of grace in one’s life. And God does the impossible in conversion, radically reordering human values.

A question to ponder: If Jesus came to you and asked you to follow Him, what one thing would you have to give up to do so?

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary (Vol. 1, pp. 143-147)*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

As a master Teacher, our Lord used many different approaches in sharing God's Word: symbols, miracles, types, parables, proverbs, and paradoxes. A paradox is a statement that seems to contradict itself and yet expresses a valid truth or principle. "When I am weak, then am I strong" is a paradox (2 Cor. 12:10; also see 2 Cor. 6:8-10). There are times when the best way to state a truth is by means of paradox; and this chapter describes our Lord doing just that. He could have preached long sermons; but instead, He gave us these five important lessons that can be expressed in five succinct, paradoxical statements.

Two Shall Be One (Mark 10:1-12)

Jesus completed His ministry in Galilee, left Capernaum, and came to the Trans-Jordan area, still on His way to the city of Jerusalem (Mark 10:32). This district was ruled by Herod Antipas, which may explain why the Pharisees tried to trap Him by asking a question about divorce. After all, John the Baptist had been slain because he preached against Herod's adulterous marriage (Mark 6:14-29).

But there was more than politics involved in their trick question, because divorce was a very controversial subject among the Jewish rabbis. No matter what answer Jesus gave, He would be sure to displease somebody, and this might give opportunity to arrest Him. The verbs indicate that the Pharisees "kept asking Him," as though they hoped to provoke Him to say something incriminating.

In that day there were two conflicting views on divorce, and which view you espoused depended on how you interpreted the phrase *some uncleanness* in Deuteronomy 24:1-4. The followers of Rabbi Hillel were quite lenient in their interpretation and permitted a man to divorce his wife for any reason, even the burning of his food. But the school of Rabbi Shammai was much more strict and taught that the critical words *some uncleanness* referred only to premarital sin. If a newly married husband discovered that his wife was not a virgin, then he could put her away.

As He usually did, Jesus ignored the current debates and focused attention on the Word of God, in this case, the Law of Moses in Deuteronomy 24:1-4. As you study this passage, it is important to note two facts. First, it was *the man* who divorced the wife, not the wife who divorced the husband; for women did not have this right in Israel. (Roman women did have the right of divorce.) Second, the official "bill of divorcement" was given to the wife to declare her status and to assure any prospective husband that she was indeed free to remarry. Apart from the giving of this document, the only other requirement was that the woman not return to her first husband if her second husband divorced her. Among the Jews, the question was not, "May a divorced woman marry again?" because remarriage was permitted and even expected. The big question was, "What are the legal grounds for a man to divorce his wife?"

The Law of Moses did not give adultery as grounds for divorce; for, in Israel, the adulterer and adulteress were stoned to death (Deut. 22:22; Lev. 20:10; also see John 8:1-11). Whatever Moses meant by "some uncleanness" in Deuteronomy 24:1, it could not have been adultery.

Jesus explained that Moses gave the divorce law because of the sinfulness of the human heart. The law protected the wife by restraining the husband from impulsively divorcing her and

abusing her like an unwanted piece of furniture, instead of treating her like a human being. Without a bill of divorcement, a woman could easily become a social outcast and be treated like a harlot. No man would want to marry her, and she would be left defenseless and destitute.

By giving this commandment to Israel, God was not putting His approval on divorce or even encouraging it. Rather, He was seeking to restrain it and make it more difficult for men to dismiss their wives. He put sufficient regulations around divorce so that the wives would not become victims of their husbands' whims.

The Lord then took them back beyond Moses to the record of the original Creation (Gen. 1:27; 2:21–25). After all, in the beginning, it was *God* who established marriage; and He has the right to make the rules. According to Scripture, marriage is between a man and a woman, not two men or two women; and the relationship is sacred and permanent. It is the most intimate union in the human race, for the two become one flesh. This is not true of a father and son or a mother and daughter, but it is true of a man and wife.

While the spiritual element is vitally important in marriage, the emphasis here is that marriage is a *physical* union: the two become one *flesh*, not one spirit. Since marriage is a physical union, only a physical cause can break it—either death (Rom. 7:1–3) or fornication (Matt. 5:32; 19:9). Mark did not include the “exception clause” found in Matthew, but neither did he say that death breaks the marriage union.

Privately, the Lord further explained the matter to His questioning disciples, who by now were convinced that it was a dangerous thing to get married. To remarry after divorce, *other than one granted on the grounds of fornication*, would make the person guilty of committing adultery, and this is a serious thing. Note that Jesus included the women in His warning, which certainly elevated their status in society and gave them equality of responsibility with the men. The rabbis would not have gone this far.

Mark 10:9 warns us that *man* cannot separate those who have been united in marriage, *but God can*. Since He established marriage, He has the right to lay down the rules. A divorce may be legal according to our laws and yet not be right in the eyes of God. He expects married people to practice commitment to each other (Mark 10:7) and to remain true to each other. Too many people view divorce as “an easy way out,” and do not take seriously their vows of commitment to each other and to the Lord.

Adults Shall Be as Children (Mark 10:13–16)

First marriage, then children; the sequence is logical. Unlike many “moderns” today, the Jews of that day looked on children as a blessing and not a burden, a rich treasure from God and not a liability (Pss. 127–128). To be without children brought a couple both sorrow and disgrace.

It was customary for parents to bring their children to the rabbis for a blessing, and so it was reasonable that they would bring the little ones to Jesus. Some were infants in arms (Luke 18:15), while others were young children able to walk; and He welcomed them all.

Why would the disciples rebuke the people and try to keep the children away from Jesus? (See Matt. 15:23 and Mark 6:36 for other instances of the disciples' seeming hardness of heart.) They probably thought they were doing Him a favor by helping Him protect His time and conserve His strength. In other words, *they did not consider the children to be important!* Their attitude was strange, because Jesus had already taught them to receive the children in His name and to be careful not to cause any of them to stumble (Mark 9:36ff). Once again, they forgot what He had taught them.

The phrase *much displeased* is too tame. Our Lord actually became indignant as He openly rebuked His disciples for standing in the way. Then He announced that the children were better kingdom examples than were the adults. We tell the children to behave like adults, but Jesus tells the adults to model themselves after the children!

In what ways are children a pattern? In their humble dependence on others, their receptivity, their acceptance of themselves and their position in life. Of course, Jesus was speaking about an unspoiled child, not one who was trying to act like an adult. A child enjoys much but can explain very little. Children live by faith. By faith they accept their lot, trusting others to care for them and see them through.

We enter God's kingdom by faith, like little children: helpless, unable to save ourselves, totally dependent on the mercy and grace of God. We enjoy God's kingdom by faith, believing that the Father loves us and will care for our daily needs. What does a child do when he or she has a hurt or a problem? Take it to Father and Mother! What an example for us to follow in our relationship with our Heavenly Father! Yes, God wants us to be childlike, but not childish!

There is no suggestion here that Jesus baptized these children, for Jesus did not even baptize adults (John 4:1–2). If the disciples had been accustomed to baptizing infants, they certainly would not have turned the people away. Jesus took these precious little ones in His loving arms and blessed them—and what a blessing that must have been!

The First Shall Be Last (Mark 10:17–31)

Of all the people who ever came to the feet of Jesus, this man is the only one who went away worse than he came. And yet he had so much in his favor! He was a young man (Matt. 19:22) with great potential. He was respected by others, for he held some ruling office, perhaps in a local court (Luke 18:18). Certainly, he had manners and morals, and there was enough desire in his heart for spiritual things that he ran up to Jesus and bowed at His feet. In every way, he was an ideal young man; and when Jesus beheld him, He loved him.

With all of his fine qualities, the young man was very superficial in his views of spiritual things. He certainly had a shallow view of salvation, for he thought that he could *do something* to earn or merit eternal life. This was a common belief in that day among the Jews (John 6:28), and it is very common today. Most unsaved people think that God will one day add up their good works and their bad works; and if their good works exceed their bad works, they will get into heaven.

Behind this good-works approach to salvation is a superficial view of sin, man, the Bible, Jesus Christ, and salvation. Sin is rebellion against the holy God. It is not simply an action; it is an inward attitude that exalts man and defies God. Did this young man actually think that he could do a few religious works and settle his account with the holy God?

The young man had a superficial view of Jesus Christ. He called Him “Good Master” (Teacher), but we get the impression that he was trying to flatter the Lord; for the Jewish rabbis did not allow the word *good* to be applied to them. Only God was good, and the word must be reserved for Him alone. Jesus was not denying that He was God; rather, He was affirming it. He just wanted to be sure that the young man really knew what he was saying and that he was willing to accept the responsibilities involved.

This explains why Jesus pointed the young man to the Law of Moses: He wanted him to see himself as a sinner bowed before the holy God. We cannot be saved from sin by keeping the Law (Gal. 2:16–21; Eph. 2:8–10). The Law is a mirror that shows us how dirty we are, but the mirror cannot wash us. One purpose of the Law is to bring the sinner to Christ (Gal. 3:24), which is

what it did in this man's case. The Law can bring the sinner to Christ, but the Law cannot make the sinner like Christ. Only grace can do that.

The young ruler did not see himself as a condemned sinner before the holy God. He had a superficial view of the Law of God, for he measured obedience only by external actions and not by inward attitudes. As far as his actions were concerned, he was blameless (see Phil. 3:6); but his inward attitudes were not blameless, because he was covetous. He may have kept some of the commandments, but the last commandment caught him: "Thou shalt not covet!" Covetousness is a terrible sin; it is subtle and difficult to detect, and yet it can cause a person to break all the other commandments. "For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil" (1 Tim. 6:10, NASB).

Looking at this young man, you would conclude that he had everything, but Jesus said that one thing was lacking: *a living faith in God*. Money was his god: he trusted it, worshiped it, and got his fulfillment from it. His morality and good manners only concealed a covetous heart.

Our Lord's directions in Mark 10:21 are not to be applied to everyone who wants to become a disciple, because Jesus was addressing the specific needs of the rich young ruler. The man was rich, so Jesus told him to liquidate his estate and give the money to the poor. The man was a ruler, so Jesus told him to take up a cross and follow Him which would be a humbling experience. Jesus offered this man the gift of eternal life, but he turned it down. It is difficult to receive a gift when your fist is clenched around money and the things money can buy. The Greek word translated "grieved" gives the picture of storm clouds gathering. The man walked out of the sunshine and into a storm! He wanted to get salvation on his terms, and he was disappointed.

The disciples were shocked at the Lord's declaration about wealth, because most Jews thought that the possession of great wealth was the evidence of God's special blessing. Many people today still cling to this error, in spite of the message of Job, the example of Christ and the Apostles, and the clear teaching of the New Testament. In the case of this young man, his wealth *robbed him* of God's greatest blessing, eternal life. Today, wealth continues to make rich people poor and the first last (see 1 Cor. 1:26–31).

Money is a marvelous servant but a terrible master. If you possess money, be grateful and use it for God's glory; but if money possesses you, beware! It is good to have the things that money can buy, provided you don't lose the things that money cannot buy. The deceitfulness of riches had so choked the soil of this young man's heart that he was unable to receive the good seed of the Word and be saved (Matt. 13:22). What a bitter harvest he would reap one day!

However, Peter's response indicated that there were a few problems in his own heart. "What then will there be for us?" (Matt. 19:27, NASB) This statement reveals a rather commercial view of the Christian life: "We have given up everything for the Lord; now, what will we get in return?" Contrast Peter's words with those of the three Hebrew men in Daniel 3:16–18, and with Peter's later testimony in Acts 3:6. He certainly came a long way from "What will I get?" to "What I have, I will give!"

Jesus assured His disciples that no one who follows Him will ever lose what is really important, either in this life or in the life to come. God will reward each one. However, we must be sure our motives are right: "For My sake and the Gospel's" (see Mark 8:35). The well-known Christian industrialist of a decade ago, R.J. LeTourneau, used to say, "If you give because it pays, it won't pay!" If we sacrifice only to get a reward, that reward will never come.

Note that Jesus also promised "persecutions." He had already told His disciples what both the Jews and Gentiles would do to Him in Jerusalem, and now He informed them that they would have their share of persecution. God balances blessings with battles, developing mature sons and daughters.

To the general public, the rich ruler stood first and the poor disciples stood last. But God saw things from the perspective of eternity—and the first became last while the last became first! Those who are first in their own eyes will be last in God’s eyes, but those who are last in their own eyes will be rewarded as first! What an encouragement for true disciples!

Grassmick, J. D. (1985). *Mark*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 148-152) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books

d. *The permanence of marriage (10:1–12) (Matt. 19:1–12; Luke 16:18).*

10:1. On Jesus’ final journey to Jerusalem, He **left that place**, Capernaum in Galilee (cf. 9:33), **and went into ... Judea** west of the Jordan River **and then across the Jordan** into Perea on the east side.

Because of His popularity in these areas (cf. 3:8) He drew **crowds of people** around Him **again** and **as was His custom** (cf. 1:21–22; 2:13; 4:1–2; 6:2, 6b, 34; 11:17; 12:35) **He taught them** again. The second “again,” left untranslated in the NIV, was included for emphasis. Thus He resumed His public ministry (cf. 9:30–31).

Though Jesus’ later Judean and Perean ministries covered a span of about six months, Mark recorded only some of the closing events which probably occurred in Perea (cf. 10:2–52 with Luke 18:15–19:27).

10:2. A group of **Pharisees** questioned Jesus about **divorce** in order to test (from *peirazō*; cf. 8:11; 12:15b) **Him**. They wanted Him to give a self-incriminating answer that would arouse opposition against Him. Perhaps He would contradict Deuteronomy 24:1–4 (cf. Mark 10:4). All Pharisees agreed that this Old Testament passage permitted divorce, that only the husband could initiate it, and that divorce implied the right to remarry. But they disagreed on the grounds of divorce. The strict view of Rabbi Shammai allowed divorce only if a wife were guilty of immorality; the lenient view of Rabbi Hillel allowed a husband to divorce his wife for almost any reason (cf. Mishnah *Gittin* 9. 10). Perhaps Jesus would take sides in this dispute and thereby split the ranks of His followers. Or perhaps He would offend Herod Antipas as John the Baptist had done (cf. 6:17–19) and be arrested since He was under Herod’s jurisdiction in Perea. Herod had married his half-niece Herodias despite the decrees in Leviticus 18.

10:3–4. Jesus’ counterquestion set aside the casuistry of Rabbinic interpretation and directed the Pharisees to the Old Testament (cf. 7:9, 13). The verb **command** indicates **He** asked about Mosaic legislation on the divorce issue.

In response, they summarized Deuteronomy 24:1–4, the basis for their divorce practices. They believed that **Moses permitted a** husband to divorce his wife if he protected her from the charge of adultery by writing out **a certificate of divorce** in the presence of witnesses, signing it, and giving it to her (cf. Mishnah *Gittin* 1. 1–3; 7. 2). In ancient Israel adultery was punishable by death, usually stoning (cf. Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22–25), when guilt was clearly established (cf. Num. 5:11–31). By Jesus’ time (about A.D. 30) the death penalty was dropped (cf. Matt. 1:19–20), but Rabbinic law compelled a husband to divorce an adulterous wife (cf. Mishnah *Sotah* 1. 4–5; *Gittin* 4. 7).

10:5. **Moses wrote ... this Law** (Deut. 24:1–4), **Jesus** said, in view of their hardheartedness, their obstinate refusal to accept God’s view of marriage. Moses *acknowledged* the presence of divorce in Israel but did not institute or authorize it.

10:6–8. Jesus then contrasted their view of marriage with God’s view **from the beginning of Creation** (Jesus quoted both Gen. 1:27 and 2:24). **God made them**, the first couple, Adam and Eve, distinctly **male and female** yet fully complementary to each other. **A man shall leave behind his parents, shall be united to his wife, and the two—man and woman—will become one flesh.** As “one flesh” they form a new unit comprising a sexually intimate, all-encompassing couple just as indissoluble in God’s present Creation order as a blood relationship between parent and child.

So (*hōste*, “so then”) **they are no longer two, but one** (lit., “one flesh,” a one-flesh unit). Marriage is not a contract of temporary convenience which can be readily broken; it is a covenant of mutual fidelity to a lifelong union made before God (cf. Prov. 2:16–17; Mal. 2:13–16).

10:9. Jesus then added a prohibition. **Therefore**, in light of verses 6–8, **what God has joined together as one flesh, let man not separate** (*chōrizetō*, cf. this Gr. verb in 1 Cor. 7:10, 15). “Man” (*anthrōpos*, probably meaning the husband) is to stop disrupting marriage through divorce. Marriage is to be a monogamous, heterosexual, permanent one-flesh relationship. Jesus indirectly confirmed John the Baptist’s courageous pronouncement (cf. Mark 6:18), contradicting the Pharisees’ lax views.

10:10–12. Later, **when** Jesus’ **disciples** questioned Him privately **about this subject in the house** (cf. 7:17), **He** added, **Anyone who divorces** (*apolysē*, “releases,” same word in 15:6, 9, 15) **his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her**, his first wife (cf. Ex. 20:14, 17). According to Mark 10:12, which is unique to Mark, the same applies to a woman who **divorces her husband and marries another man**. These words were significant for Mark’s Roman readers since under Roman law a wife could initiate divorce. Though not allowed under Jewish law such action was sometimes practiced in Palestine (e.g., Herodias, 6:17–18).

Divorce violates God’s Creation ordinance, but does not dissolve it. Jesus left open the possibility of divorce for sexual immorality as demanded by Jewish law in New Testament times (10:4). But remarriage, though permitted under Rabbinic law, was here forbidden by Jesus. (Many interpreters believe that Jesus gave one exception to this. See comments on Matt. 5:32; 19:1–12.) God’s desire for a “broken” marriage is forgiveness and reconciliation (cf. Hosea 1–3; 1 Cor. 7:10–11).

e. The reception of God’s kingdom in childlike trust (10:13–16) (Matt. 19:13–15; Luke 18:15–17)

This episode complemented Jesus’ teaching on marriage and offset the Pharisees’ opposition (Mark 10:2–12). It probably took place “in the house” (v. 10). The incident came to be used in later church history in connection with infant baptism but without clear warrant from the passage.

10:13. **People**—mothers, fathers, older children, and others—**were bringing little children** (*paidia*, those ranging from babies to preteens, cf. same word in 5:39; a different word *brephē*, meaning infants and young children, is used in Luke 18:15) **to Jesus** in order that He might **touch them**, a visible means of conveying God’s blessing on their future lives (cf. Mark 10:16). **The disciples rebuked them** (cf. 8:30, 32–33) and tried to keep them from going to Jesus. They probably thought children were unimportant (cf. 9:36–37) and should not waste His time—another instance where they thought only in human-cultural categories (cf. 8:32–33; 9:33–37).

10:14. **Jesus ... was indignant** (cf. v. 41) at the disciples’ interference (cf. 9:38). This verb of strong emotional reaction is unique to Mark who highlighted Jesus’ emotions more than the

other Gospel writers (cf. 1:25, 41, 43; 3:5; 7:34; 8:12; 9:19). Jesus' sharp double command—**Let** (lit., “start allowing”) **the little children come to Me, and do not hinder** (lit., “stop preventing”) **them**—was a rebuke to the disciples (who had rebuked the people!).

Jesus welcomed the children because **the kingdom of God**, God's present spiritual rule in people's lives (cf. comments on 1:14–15), **belongs** as a possession **to such as these**. All, including children, who come to Jesus in childlike trust and dependence, are given free access to Jesus.

10:15. In a solemn pronouncement (**I tell you the truth**; cf. 3:28) Jesus developed the truth in 10:14. Whoever **will not receive** God's **kingdom** as a gift now with the trustful attitude of a **child will never** (emphatic negative, *ou mē*, “by no means”) **enter it**. He will be excluded from its future blessings, specifically eternal life (cf. vv. 17, 23–26). God's kingdom is not gained by human achievement or merit; it must be received as God's gift through simple trust by those who acknowledge their inability to gain it any other way (cf. comments on 1:15).

10:16. Jesus' loving action (cf. 9:36) vividly illustrated that His blessing is freely given to those who receive it trustingly. The intensive compound verb **blessed** (*kateulogei*, occurring only here in the NT) emphasizes the warmhearted fervor with which Jesus blessed each child who came to Him.

f. The rejection of God's kingdom by trust in riches (10:17–27) (Matt. 19:16–26; Luke 18:18–27)

This event probably took place as Jesus was leaving the house (cf. Mark 10:10) somewhere in Perea. The rich man illustrated those who fail to acknowledge their own inability to gain eternal life and to receive it as God's gift (cf. vv. 13–16).

10:17. **As Jesus** was setting out **on His way** (cf. comments on 8:27) to Jerusalem (10:32) **a man**, influential, wealthy, and young (cf. Matt. 19:20, 22; Luke 18:18), came running **to Him**. His eager approach, kneeling posture, sincere form of address (**Good Teacher**, not used by Jews to address a Rabbi), and profound question revealed his earnestness and respect for Jesus as a spiritual Guide.

This man's question indicated that he viewed **eternal life** as something to be achieved by doing good (in contrast with Mark 10:15; cf. Matt. 19:16) and also that he felt insecure about his future destiny. References to **eternal life** (mentioned in Mark only in 10:17, 30), “entering God's kingdom” (vv. 23–25), and being “saved” (v. 26) all focus on the future possession of life with God, though a person enters it now by accepting God's rule in his earthly life. John's Gospel emphasizes the *present* possession of eternal life.

10:18. **Jesus** challenged the man's faulty perception of **good** as something measured by human achievement. **No one is good**, absolutely perfect, **except God alone**, the true Source and Standard of goodness. The man needed to see himself in the context of God's perfect character. Jesus' response did not deny His own deity but was a veiled claim to it. The man, unwittingly calling Him “good,” needed to perceive Jesus' true identity. (Later, however, he dropped the word “good,” v. 20.)

10:19–20. In answering the man's question directly, Jesus quoted five **commandments** from the so-called “second table” of the Decalogue (cf. Ex. 20:12–16; Deut. 5:16–20) but in a different order. Obedience to those commands dealing with human relationships are more easily verified in a person's conduct than are the earlier commands (Ex. 20:3–8). The command, **Do not defraud**, not a part of the Decalogue and occurring only in Mark, may represent the 10th

commandment (Ex. 20:17). But more likely, it is an appropriate supplement to the 8th and/or 9th commandments (Ex. 20:15–16) applicable to a wealthy person (cf. Lev. 6:2–5; Mal. 3:5).

The man's reply shows he firmly believed he had **kept** these commandments perfectly (cf. Phil. 3:6) **since** he **was a boy**, since age 12 when he assumed personal responsibility for keeping the Law as a "son of the Law" (*bar Mitzvah*; cf. Luke 2:42–47). Perhaps he had expected Jesus to prescribe something meritorious that he needed to do to make up for any lack.

10:21–22. With a penetrating look (from *emblepō*; cf. 3:5), **Jesus** saw beneath the rich man's religious devotion to his deepest need **and loved him**, something mentioned only in Mark (cf. comment on 10:14). The **one** necessary **thing** he lacked was unrivaled allegiance to God, since wealth was his god (v. 22). He was devoted to it rather than God, thereby breaking the first commandment (Ex. 20:3).

Jesus commanded two things: (1) The man was to **go, sell** all his assets, **and give to the poor**, thereby removing the obstacle blocking him from eternal life, namely, self-righteous achievement coupled with a love for money. (2) Also Jesus told him to **follow** Him to Jerusalem and the Cross. The way to eternal life was in turning from trust in self-attainments and earthly securities to trust in Jesus (cf. Mark 10:14–15).

The man, saddened by Jesus' directives, **went away**. This particular *form* of self-denial—to sell all—was appropriate in this situation but is not a requirement for all prospective disciples.

10:23–25. When **Jesus** told the **disciples** that it is **hard ... for the rich to enter** God's **kingdom**, they **were amazed** (*ethambounto*, "surprised"; cf. 1:27; 10:32) because in Judaism riches were a mark of God's favor and thus an advantage, not a barrier, in relation to God's kingdom. Only here in the Synoptic Gospels did **Jesus** address the Twelve as **children** (cf. John 13:33), reflecting their spiritual immaturity.

In light of their surprise Jesus repeated and clarified His original statement. If the words "for those who trust in riches" (NIV) are omitted, Mark 10:24 (which is unique to Mark) applies to everybody who is confronted with the demands of God's **kingdom**. If included, they explain the rich man's difficulty and expose the danger of trusting in riches.

The humorous comparison (v. 25) employs a memorable Jewish proverb to depict the impossible. **It is easier** by comparison **for a camel**, the largest animal in Palestine at that time, **to go through the eye of a common sewing needle** (the smallest opening) **than for a rich man** who trusts in his riches **to enter** God's **kingdom**.

10:26–27. Jesus' statement (v. 25) greatly **amazed** (*exeplēssonto*, "astounded, struck out of their senses, overwhelmed"; cf. 1:22; 6:2; 7:37; 11:18) **the disciples**. They carried it to its logical conclusion: If it is impossible for a rich man to enter God's kingdom, **Who then can be saved?** (delivered to life eternal; cf. 10:17, 30)

Jesus offset their concern by declaring **that salvation is impossible** with men—beyond their human merit or achievement—**but not with God**. It is not beyond His power to bring about because **all things** necessary for people's salvation—rich and poor alike—**are possible with God** (cf. Job 42:2). What people cannot effect, God can and does by His grace (cf. Eph. 2:8–10).

g. The rewards of discipleship (10:28–31) (Matt. 19:27–30; Luke 18:28–30).

10:28. Acting as spokesman (cf. 8:29) **Peter** presumptuously reminded Jesus that the Twelve, unlike the rich man (**we** is emphatic in Gr., suggesting the contrast), had **left everything to follow** Him (cf. 1:16–20; 2:14; 10:21–22). The implication was, "What recompense shall we get?" (cf. Matt. 19:27) Again this reflected the disciples' tendency to think of material honors in God's kingdom (cf. Mark 9:33–34; 10:35–37; Matt. 19:28–29).

10:29–30. In another solemn affirmation (**I tell you the truth**; cf. v. 15; 3:28) Jesus acknowledged that their allegiance to **Him and the gospel** (cf. 1:1; 8:35) entailed a break with old ties—**home**, loved ones, or property (**fields**), as the case may be (cf. 13:11–13; Luke 9:59–62). But to everyone who makes the break Jesus promised that all these things will be replaced a hundredfold by new ties with fellow disciples (cf. Mark 3:31–35; Acts 2:41–47; 1 Tim. 5:1–2) **in this present Age**, the time period between Jesus’ First and Second Advents. Then **in the Age to come**, the future Age following Jesus’ return (from a NT viewpoint), each will receive the ultimate recompense—**eternal life** (cf. Mark 10:17).

In verse 30 the word “father” (cf. v. 29) is omitted since God is the Father of the new spiritual family (cf. 11:25). The words **with them** (the rewards), **persecutions** are added realistically by Mark alone. As Jesus said later (10:43–45) discipleship involves service, which often includes suffering. This was relevant to Mark’s Roman readers who faced persecution. This fact helped remove the temptation to associate with Jesus simply for the rewards (cf. v. 31).

10:31. This “floating saying” (cf. these same words in other contexts: Matt. 20:16; Luke 13:30) could be intended as (a) a warning against Peter’s presumption (Mark 10:28), (b) a confirmation of Jesus’ promise (vv. 29–30), or most likely, (c) a summary of Jesus’ teaching about the servant nature of discipleship (cf. 9:35; 10:43–45). Rewards in God’s kingdom are not based on earthly standards such as rank, priority, or duration of time served, personal merit, or sacrifice (cf. Matt. 20:1–16), but on commitment to Jesus and following Him faithfully.

Leavell, L.P. (1972). *Mark*. In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), *The Teacher’s Bible Commentary* (p. 626). Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers.

Teachings on Discipleship (Mark 10:1–31)

The passage—Beginning in chapter 10, Jesus sets his face toward Jerusalem.

Jesus’ teaching on divorce is found in 10:1–12. The purpose in marriage is that two persons shall become one. Anything short of that is failure and a compromise of God’s purpose. The New Testament gives one reason, which God approves, for divorce. There is absolute silence regarding remarriage, even if the reason for divorce is biblical. It is always hazardous to try to speak where the Bible is silent.

The necessity of childlikeness is found in 10:13–16. This passage points up the kind of mind with which Jesus can work. It implies a willingness to receive and to follow. It also involves wonder and awe.

The grave danger of great riches is told in 10:17–31. This polite person referred to Jesus in a complimentary fashion. Jesus tried to find out if he actually believed he was God. In referring to the commandments, Jesus was not implying that salvation came in keeping them. This was rather the quickest way to unmask this egocentric individual. A man is not saved by giving away his possessions. He becomes a Christian when he is willing to renounce anything that stands between himself and Christ.

The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). Mark 10:1-31. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.