

Who then can be saved?

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[0 : 00] If we can turn back to the passage that we read in Matthew chapter 19. Matthew 19, we're going to look at the majority of the passage, but especially the words in verse 25.

It says, When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, Who then can be saved? I want to look at this passage under three headings.

The first one being the children, the second one being the young man, and the third one being, Who then can be saved? If we look firstly at the verses 13 to 15.

In these three verses, we're not told who brought the children, or how many children there were, but the children were brought to Jesus.

It probably was their parents, guardians, or nurses that brought them. But whoever brought them was testifying their respect to Christ and how they valued his blessings for their children.

[1 : 23] This is actually remarkable in this day, because in ancient society, Greco-Roman and Jewish alike, children were there to be seen and not heard.

I know it's a saying that we've had, and it's been going about until very recently. But children did not matter until they had grown up.

In Matthew 18 and verse 3 and 4, Jesus says, Truly I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. This shows that children do matter and have much to teach us and that their attitudes to trust, simplicity, inability to put forward their own achievements and dependence are all characteristics of true disciples.

We should then really ask ourselves, and I should ask myself, do we have these characteristics? If we don't, then we should look at changing something in our lives, as we should all trust and be dependent on the Lord and not on ourselves.

[3 : 03] Children are also more sensitive to the things of God than adults, as they want to learn. And these qualities, really, are priceless in the kingdom of God.

It was therefore, actually really, good last week to see the three children brought into the visible church. And we should always remember these three children and all the children of our congregation and our prayers.

Christ saw the faith, of those who brought the little children. It's something that we always miss. But he rebuked the disciples, who actually were only thinking what they were doing was best in their time, when they tried to stop them.

But we must be thankful that Christ has more love and tenderness in them than the best of his disciples. Because if he hadn't, then we don't know what we'd be like today.

And we probably wouldn't even be here because we wouldn't have the opportunity to be saved. But Jesus let those little children. He let them come and he laid his hands upon them and he blessed them.

[4 : 33] Why? In his own words, he says, for as such is the kingdom of heaven. Yes, heaven is made up of all ages.

So if you know of someone who is willing and wants to seek Christ, we should not hinder them. Even though they are weak, but welcome them in and help them.

Verse 16 to 22 then tells us of a rich man. And we can even look further in Luke's gospel and it tells us he was also a ruler.

He asks a question that was typical of the religious attitude in those days, especially of the Pharisees.

But actually, it's the attitude among a lot of churchgoers today and many others when he says, good teacher, what good deeds must I do to have eternal life?

[5 : 53] This young man respectfully calls him teacher. I'm not going to try and pronounce the Greek words for it, because I'll make a mess of them, but the words that he used shows his submissiveness and willingness to be taught.

And the only other person that we know in the Bible who used this title was Nicodemus when he came by night to Jesus. not even Christ's own disciples used these words to call him teacher.

The young man had actually an uncommon respect for Jesus when he called him good as the Pharisees in those days did not even call their own teachers good.

he was self-confident and that he was sure that life eternal was something that lay within his own power to attain by doing the right thing.

How many of us think that we can gain eternal life by doing good works? Be honest. we probably thought we probably thought we could do it ourselves.

[7 : 14] Throughout this island and the whole of the UK and the world there are many people who think they can go to heaven just by their own charitable deeds. Jesus, however, did not want to send the man away without an answer as he was pleased that he actually asked him the question.

he says to the young man why do you call me good as there is only one who is good? Christ said this as there is only God who is good.

As we can see in James 1 verse 17 where it says every good gift and perfect gift is from above coming down from the Father with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change shows us that God is the only good that there is.

But Jesus undoubtedly wanted to probe beneath the man's bland exterior and point him to the absolute goodness of God himself from whom he was actually running away when he was trying to gain eternal life by his own good deeds.

it was unusual that the young man thought like this because in Judaism it never says never does and never has saw law keeping as the way to life as they were always looking for the Messiah.

[8 : 57] the Ten Commandments themselves were laid down for people who had experienced God's rescue and wanted to respond worthily. As it says in the passage we read in the Old Testament in Exodus 20 verse 2 I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt out of the house of slavery.

Jesus however takes the young man back to the law and asks him if he has kept the commandments. Paul in his letter to the Romans in chapter 13 verses 8 and 10 also uses the commandments by saying O no one anything except to love each other for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.

The commandments you shall not commit adultery you shall not commit murder you shall not steal you shall not covet and any other commandment are summed up in this word you shall love your neighbour as yourself.

Love does no wrong to a neighbour therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. But the young man asks which ones do I need to have eternal life?

The young man wasn't seeing what Jesus was getting at. But Jesus could easily have said to him keep them all. But no he directed the man's attention to the second half of the decalogue.

[10 : 32] As we read in Matthew 19 verses 18 and 19 he said to him that is the young man which ones and Jesus said you shall not murder you shall not commit adultery you shall not steal you shall not bear false witness honour your father and mother and you shall love your neighbour as yourself.

Jesus knew that the young man was proud of his social and religious achievements just as he knows everything about us. but he was determined to allow the law of God to have its conflicting effect where the young man was proud.

Have you kept all the commandments? I know I haven't. But I know from reading them it shows me my weaknesses that I can go to the Lord with for help.

Jesus hints at the man's greatest weakness by putting the dialogue out of order and putting honour your father and mother at the end.

This shows that the man's relationship with his parents was one of his weak areas. And Jesus also added love your neighbour as yourself.

[12 : 02] For as it is written in Leviticus 19 verses 17 and 18 You shall not hate your brother in your heart but you shall reason frankly with your neighbour lest you incur sin because of him.

You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your people but you shall love your neighbour as yourself. I am the Lord. This edition of Love Your Neighbour as Yourself was common in the Jewish Catechism.

But it's particularly apt here as the young man was weak in his relationship with God he is also weak in care for his neighbour. This was because he was rich yet many of the people about him had nothing and even some were hungry.

He had no urge to help any one of them except himself. the young man was selfish through and through. He was in bondage to his possessions.

He was actually breaking the first commandment in that he was making his riches into an idol before God but Jesus didn't even mention this to him.

[13:15] Instead Jesus cut to the heart of the man's selfishness and told him to sell all his possessions and give to the poor.

Money riches were getting in the way between the young man and the kingdom of heaven. He had to deal ruthlessly with the stumbling block if he was serious about wanting to enter into eternal life. But this young man preferred his riches to a life following Jesus and so it says he went away sorrowfully. He failed the test. If he really wanted to gain the perfection of life that he desired he needed to get rid of the stumbling block and follow Christ.

In the Gospel of John chapter 17 verse 3 it clearly states and this is eternal life that they know you the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

We can also see this in Psalm 49 where the psalmist writes in verses 6-9 those who trust in their wealth and boast of the abundance of their riches truly no man can ransom another or give to God the price of his life for the ransom of their life is costly and can never suffice that he should live on forever and never see the pit.

[14:47] even the psalmist realised that no one could buy their way to heaven as the price was too dear. The psalmist speaks again in chapter 52 verse 7 where he says see the man who would not make God his refuge but trust in the abundance of his riches and sought refuge in his own destruction.

Yes the psalmist is telling us that trusting in our own riches will bring destruction. For the young man the stumbling block was his riches.

Have you a stumbling block? Is it your money in the bank? Your car? Your work? Your sheep? Your cattle? Television?

Hobbies? If there's something stopping you from following Christ you need to be ruthless and deal with it or it will always come before you and God.

But who then can be saved? As we see in verses 23 and 24 where Jesus says to his disciples truly I say to you only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven.

[16:12] Again I tell you it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God. The whole point of a camel going through the eye of a needle seems ridiculous.

And I know there are many different versions of what this is but when Jesus says the eye of a needle I think he actually just means the eye of a needle. Like a needle you sew with.

And when he says a camel he really means a great big old smelly ugly camel that people ride across the desert on. Look at a camel and then at the eye of a needle.

Christ's saying it's easier to get this camel through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to go to heaven. Why? Because as we saw with a young man rich people trust in their own belongings. they like their richness they like their goods. It's easier for a poor person to get saved because a poor person says if Jesus doesn't come and save me I'm sunk.

[17:32] but a rich man says if Jesus doesn't come and save me that's okay. I've got my pension.

I've got my stocks and shares. I've got my safety net. If he doesn't come through it doesn't matter. I can take care of things myself. Just like we mentioned earlier with the psalmist in Psalm 52 the man who trusts in his own riches seeks his own destruction.

What are you saying? Frankly it is impossible for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. And it's impossible for a rich man to enter heaven.

It can't be done. Because money tends to make one selfish, materialistic, independent of God and distract.

us as we try to retain one's wealth. Wealth leads to an overconfidence in ourselves and you lose that childlike spirit of trusting dependence on the goodness of God.

[18 : 53] It just happened in front of the disciples. They saw the young man go away sorrowful. Christians who have great possessions are actually in great peril of relying on themselves more than on God.

So beware. Also as an aside, in Job 42 verse 2 where Job is confessing and repenting, he says, I know that you can do all things and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.

Job's here even realises that after all he has been through and having all his wealth and family taken away, that by God all things are possible and his path cannot be changed.

But who then can be saved? Well, simply no one. it's impossible for anyone with whether religious, rich or poor to be saved as no one can earn or pay his or her own way to the kingdom of heaven. Many have tried but will have failed. With humanity it is impossible but with God all things are possible.

[20 : 16] Jesus knows how to bring believers into the kingdom. it cost him everything. He had to come and die on the cross at Calvary and then be raised three days later.

If there would have been any other way he would have done it, he would have. Jesus' answer is based on one God and one divine grace as without grace nobody can enter the kingdom.

As we have heard before grace stands for God's riches at Christ's expense. But how? Jesus says in John 3 16 for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Yes all you have to do is come to Jesus and ask him to come into your life. You don't need anything you just have to ask. Just as it says in the chorus Jesus take me as I am I can come the other way take me deeper into you make my flesh life melt away make me like a precious stone crystal clear and finely honed life of Jesus shining through giving glory back to you.

also as I was saying to the children in the children's address Jesus is the bridge between us and God as we can see in the famous verse of John 14 and 6 where Jesus says I am the way the truth and the life no one comes to the father except through me.

[21 : 59] All you need to do is acknowledge that you're a sinner and that you have a desire to turn from that sin then just pray to the Lord asking him to forgive believing that Jesus Christ died in your place and rose again and that you choose to invite him directly into your life and that you will follow him as he asks you to do.

Don't let your stumbling block get in the way. I know some of you want to really know the Lord but have stumbling blocks that are stopping you coming to Christ.

It might even be a member of your family who is stopping you because you're afraid of what they will say. Encouragement comes in many ways and one is actually in a chorus of a hymn that I found where it says no no it's not an easy road no no it's not an easy road but Jesus walks beside me and brightens the journey and lightens every heavy load.

Yes Jesus walks beside you. Jesus takes your burdens. I know you may be thinking that rich people can't be saved so there may be no hope for you but they can.

they can be saved but only if they are willing to give up their trust and their riches and they've got to start trusting in Jesus and him alone.

[23 : 41] Whenever you stop trusting in money and the things that money can buy and turn your life over to Jesus Christ then and then only will your heart be satisfied.

the one thing you lack God offers to you now. He offers you forgiveness and a brand new life.

The one thing you need is yours for the asking. Consider something that money can't buy. Let Jesus into your life. Friends in conclusion what I would ask you to do if you have the desire to have Jesus in your life.

It's not to put it off any longer as that is what Satan wants you to do. But we do not know the time or the hour when we will die and be called to answer for our lives.

If you do not have the Lord in your life I don't know what hell is like but I would not want to go there. Instead heaven is far better than even our own imagination can ever think.

[24 : 57] So before you leave here or once you get home ask the Lord into your life because as the hymn writer wrote because he lives I can face tomorrow.

Because he lives all fear is gone. Because I know he holds the future and life is worth the living just because he lives.

Amen. Let us pray. Heavenly Father we know and pray that you open your arms to young children and we thank you for that Lord.

But Lord we pray that you will open your arms to to whoever knocks, whoever opens that door that you were knocking on.

Open your arms Lord to whoever has the desire to come to you. Help them Lord. Help them take away their stumbling blocks. Help them come to know you Lord.

[26 : 08] Help us Lord all to face tomorrow. Help us Lord to take our fear away. Because Lord I know you hold the future. And that life is worth the living just because you live.

Heavenly Father we pray and thank you for these words. We pray Lord that if these words have not been because they're what you want it to be said we pray Lord that you will amend them in the hearts of each one of us.

Lord we pray that they will have planted a seed somewhere. And Lord we pray that you will help each one of us. Help each one of us Lord to take away our own stumbling blocks.

But help us Lord to come closer to you and follow you as your own and personal saviour. Lord go before us in your son's name.

Amen. Amen. We'll close our service singing together in the words of the Scottish Psalter Psalm 25.

[27 : 30] That's on page 331. No it's not.

It's on page 231. Psalm 25 from verse 4 down to the words of verse 10.

Show me thy ways, O Lord, thy path so teach thou me, and do thou lead me in thy truth, therein my teacher be. For thou art God that dost to me salvation send, and I upon thee all the day, expecting do attend.

Thy tender mercies, Lord, I pray thee to remember, and loving kindnesses for they have been of old forever. My sins and faults of youth do thy, O Lord, forget.

After thy mercy think on me, and for thy goodness great. God good and upright is, the way he'll sinners show, the meek and judgment he will guide, and make his path to know.

[28 : 41] The whole paths of the Lord are truth and mercy sure, to those that do his covenant keep, and testimonies pure. We'll sing these verses to God's praise.

Psalm 25, Show me thy ways, O Lord, thy path so teach thou me. Show me thy ways, O Lord, Thy path so teach thou me.

And to thou live in thy truth, better in my teacher be.

For thou art God that dost, through me salvation send, and I have found thee all the things, expecting you, my death.

Thy tender mercy, Lord, I give thee to freedom work, and I'll be thy life, and I'll be thy life, for thee, and be loved for ever.

[30 : 22] My sins and thoughts of you, through the Lord for me, after thy mercy, and for thy goodness grace.

Our good and a bright, have Heaven, and Amazing grace come to you, home, the good and a brightness measure, the hope of Noah, and his northwest, and home, The hope and song the Lord are good and good and good.

To those that do this covenant keep and test it on the earth.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, show us thy ways, O Lord. Thy paths so teach thou us.

And lead us in the truth where you're the teacher be. Lord, just as we've been singing, we pray that you will show us all the ways to go.

[32 : 15] Show us, Lord, what we should be doing. And Lord, if we haven't come to know you as our own and personal saviour, help us, Lord, to do that.

Show us how. Help us make that small prayer and ask for forgiveness. O Lord, be with each one of us today.

Help bring us back safely tonight. And now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with each one of us, now and forevermore.

Amen. Amen.