

How Do I Get To Heaven?

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Date: 09 June 2024

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[0 : 0 0] Well, if we could, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling this morning, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read, the Gospel according to Mark. Mark chapter 10.

Mark chapter 10. If you're using the church Bible, it's on page 846. Page 846. Mark chapter 10. And we'll read again in verse 17.

Mark 10 at verse 17. And as Jesus was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life? As you know, there are many reasons why people come to church.

Because people come to church, well, to worship God and to learn about God and to grow in their faith in God. There are others who come to church because, well, they've always come to church.

[1 : 1 1] So, church is just part and partial of the Sunday routine. For others, they come to church because, well, they enjoy coming to church. It's nice to come to church. They enjoy the company.

They enjoy the congregation. They enjoy the community that they find in church. For some, they come to church because the children are in Sunday school. So, we want to encourage our children to go to Sunday school.

So, we come to church. Other people come to church because they're confused about life and they want answers. Or some people, they come to church because they're convicted by their sin and they know they need salvation.

There are some people who come to church because they're interested in the gospel or they're intrigued by Jesus. Or like today, they've been invited to come to church.

Whatever the reason, there are many reasons why people come to church. Of course, there are many reasons why people don't come to church. Because they think, well, it's maybe too conservative, too cliquey, too clannish, too confusing, too Christian.

[2 : 1 8] Maybe because they're too busy or they think the minister is too boring. But whatever the reason, whatever has brought you to come to church this morning, I want you to leave church this morning with the understanding that the reason the church exists in our community, well, there are two reasons.

First of all, to glorify God. But also for us to know how to get to heaven. The church exists for us to glorify God and how to get to God.

Because at the end of the day, and at the end of our lives, when we strip back everything else, all that matters is that. That's all that matters. All that matters is how we get to heaven.

All that matters at the end of the day and at the end of our lives is how we get to heaven. And that's why this young man came to Jesus and asked that question, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

Or in other words, Jesus, how do I get to heaven? How do I get to heaven? But as was often the case with Jesus, the answer this young man received wasn't really the answer he was ready for.

[3 : 36] The answer he received wasn't the answer he was ready for. Which is why I want us to think about this passage this morning. And I want us to think about what we read under three headings.

Three headings. Righteous for heaven, rejected by heaven, and then rebuked about heaven. Righteous for heaven, rejected by heaven, and rebuked about heaven.

So first of all, we see righteous for heaven. That's our first heading. Righteous for heaven. Look at verse 17 of Mark 10. As Jesus was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, Jesus, and asked him, Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

And Jesus said to him, Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments. Do not murder. Do not commit adultery. Do not steal. Do not bear false witness.

Do not defraud. Honor your father and mother. And he said to him, Teacher, all these I have kept for my youth. Now when it comes to the question, how do I get to heaven?

[4 : 45] The thing that often puzzles people and causes problems for people is that there are so many answers given to this one question. How do I get to heaven? Because as you know, in the day and age that we live in, there are so many opinions.

There are so many options to choose from. There are a variety of views. There are a myriad of mixed messages out there about how to get to heaven. Of course, the atheist will tell us that it's all a waste of time because, well, there's no such thing as heaven.

Because at the end of the day, when you die, you cease to exist. End of story. But the agnostic is not so convinced. Because they'll admit that there must be a heaven.

There must be a heaven. And if there is a heaven, well, there must be a God. But, well, which God is right? Because there are so many theoretical and so many theological proposals and perspectives out there.

There are so many different and diverse religions and faith groups and sects, which is why there's so much confusion as to what to believe and who's telling the truth and which one is right.

[5 : 55] What makes matters worse is that there are many people who just say, well, it doesn't really matter what you believe. All roads and all religions, they all lead to the one place.

They all lead to heaven. So as long as you're sincere and you're a good person, you'll get to heaven. As long as you're sincere and you're a good person, you'll get to heaven, which sadly is the prevailing view that's promoted today.

As long as you're sincere and as long as you're a good person, you'll get to heaven. And that's because for most people, whether they're religious or not, they would like to believe that when they die, when they reach the end of their life, they're going to go to heaven. And that's because according to their self-examination and their self-estimation, they're a good person. I'm a good person. And if there is a God, well, he must be a good God.

And a good God would never send good people to hell because it's only bad people who go to hell. Good people don't go to hell. Good people always go to heaven. Good people who are good family members and good neighbors and good friends and good to their community and good at working and good at paying their taxes and good at giving to charity and good at going to church. They're good people. They don't do any hurt. They don't do any harm to people. They're the kind of people who go to heaven. So as long as you're sincere and you're a good person, you'll go to heaven.

But you know what's really remarkable is that that present perspective is as old as the Bible itself. That present perspective of how to get to heaven, it actually hasn't changed in over two or even three thousand years. Because when this young man runs up to Jesus, we're told that he kneels down and he asks nicely. He kneels down and asks nicely, good teacher, good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life? But Jesus' response, it actually reveals the truth about this young man's heart. Because Jesus answers and says, he doesn't even answer the question, Jesus answers and asks him a question, why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. Now this young man, he didn't call Jesus good because he thought Jesus was God. This young man called Jesus good because like himself, he thought Jesus was a good person. Like himself, he thought Jesus was a good person.

[8 : 43] And you know, this young man's view of Jesus, it's not unique. Because there are many people who don't believe that Jesus is God, but they believe that Jesus is a good person. I remember years ago when I was doing my apprenticeship as an electrician, which wasn't yesterday, but I was in my early 20s, and my lecturer discovered that I was a Christian, which created a conversation in our class, as it often does. But he said in front of the whole class, I remember him saying it, I don't believe that Jesus is God. But I do believe that Jesus was a good man with a good philosophy for life. And if we followed his philosophy, the world would be a better place.

And you know, that's the view this young man had of Jesus. Jesus wasn't God, but that Jesus was a good man with a good philosophy for life. He was a good teacher, that's what he calls him, good teacher.

So he was a good teacher and a good person because he did good works. And everybody knew that Jesus did good works because he helped people and he healed people and he gave hope to people.

And so he asks Jesus the question, how to get to heaven? Not because he's actually looking for an answer. He thinks he already knows the answer. Because in his mind, he's also a good person, just like Jesus is. But he comes to Jesus because he wants this good teacher, Jesus. He wants him to affirm all his acts and enlarge his ego and recognize his righteousness. He wants Jesus to emphasize and explain that you as a young man, you are an exemplary young man and that you have already inherited eternal life and you are righteous. You are righteous for heaven. That's what that young man wanted. He wanted Jesus to confirm, you are going to heaven, son. But as we read, Jesus doesn't do that.

In fact, Jesus would never do that because, as you know, Jesus, he's the only way to heaven. He's the way, the truth, and the life. And so instead of insisting that the young man is righteous for heaven, heaven, Jesus insists that he's actually being rejected by heaven, which is what we see secondly.

[11 : 08] He's rejected by heaven. So he thinks he's righteous for heaven, but he's secondly rejected by heaven. Rejected by heaven, that's our second heading. Look at verse 20.

So the young man says to Jesus, teacher, all these commandments I have kept from my youth. And Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said to him, you lack one thing. Go sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. And come follow me. Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, how difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God.

Now, as you know, if you watch the news, over the past while, one of the headlines that has been repeatedly reoccurring on the news is the trial of Donald Trump. And as you know, throughout his trial, the former president of the United States, he has persistently protested his innocence. Some would say that he would arrogantly assert that he's above the law. But now since his conviction in a court of law, it has shown us, and it sends the message to everyone, that no one is above the law, regardless of their riches or their self-righteousness. No one is above the law, regardless of their riches or their self-righteousness. And in many ways, that's what Jesus is showing this young man too.

Because this young man thought that he was righteous for heaven. He thought that his riches and his self-righteousness was enough for heaven. He thought that his good works and being a good person was enough for heaven. He thought that his childhood upbringing and his commandment keeping was enough for heaven. Because when Jesus actually clarifies the commandments, this young man, as we read, he confirms that he has kept every single one of them from his childhood. He says that in verse 19, you know the commandments, do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not bear false witness, do not defraud, honor your father and mother. And he said to Jesus, teacher, all these I have kept for my youth. You know, like many Jews, this young man would have grown up on his mother's knee.

And he would have grown up learning to read the Torah, which is the Old Testament. He would have learned to repeat a prayer, and he would have learned to recite the Shema. That phrase that they would recite morning and evening, hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And so this young man thought his childhood upbringing was enough to get him into heaven, because he claimed and confessed to this good teacher, Jesus, that he was a good custodian of God's commandments, and that he had kept all of the commandments from his youth, which, as we said to the children, was impossible even. They admitted it was impossible. But, you know, there are so many people like this young man, because they think they can claim. I once thought it too. You can claim and confess to Jesus by clinging to the fact that your Christian upbringing is enough to get you into heaven. And some people, they think that their good upbringing with godly parents and godly grandparents who brought them for baptism, and they had gospel input with family worship and Sunday school and church attendance, maybe even a profession of faith. And in their mind, they think, well, surely a good god would recognize and reward such beliefs and behavior. And Jesus says, all these things are good. They're all great things. They're all good things. They're all God things. But they're not the one thing needful for heaven.

[15 : 22] They're not the one thing needful for heaven. Now, Jesus, he's not dismissing any good thing that's done. He's telling us that we need the one thing needful for heaven. And with that, Jesus, he turns to this young man who thought that he was righteous for heaven. And we read there that he lovingly lets him know that in his current condition, he's been rejected by heaven. Jesus lovingly lets him know that in his current condition, he's been rejected by heaven. Look at verse 21. Jesus, we're told, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, you lack one thing. Go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. And come, follow me. Now, Jesus isn't saying you have to get rid of everything in your life in order to be a Christian. What Jesus is actually showing us here is how loving he really is, that he's willing to speak the truth into someone's life. Jesus is showing us how loving he really is. In fact, I would go as far as to say that Jesus is showing us as Christians, so me as a Christian, he's showing the Christian church that we are to love people by letting them know the truth. We are to love people by letting them know the truth. Because Jesus, we're told, he looked at this young man and he loved him. And he loved him because Jesus, well, he loves everyone.

In fact, Jesus was the most loving man that ever lived. Even when he was being persecuted by his enemies, he was praying for his enemies on the cross, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. More than that, Jesus displayed and demonstrated his love towards us. So, my friend, you want to know how much Jesus loves you? He died on the cross. That's what Jesus said, greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. And so, when we're told that Jesus looked at this young man and loved him, he loved him, and then he lovingly lets him know the truth about how to get to heaven. Because there's one thing Jesus doesn't want to do. Jesus doesn't want to lead this young man up the garden path. Jesus doesn't want to let this young man think that everything's going to be okay when it's not. Jesus doesn't want to let him think that he's, well, he's going to look forward to heaven when he's actually lost and going to hell.

And, you know, that's how we should be as Christians. You know, it really challenges me this, how Jesus dealt with this young man. Because far too often we look at people and we love people, but only from a distance.

We look at people in our homes and in our families, in our congregation and in our community, in our workplaces and our hobby spaces, and we lovingly invite them to church. We want them to come to church, but we also need to lovingly let them know the truth about how to get to heaven.

That doesn't mean you preach at them. People know when you're false and when you're being fake. No, we need to be just like Jesus was here. We need to have this godly and genuine desire to get to know people. Because when we get to know them, we'll look at them and we'll love them and we'll let them know the truth about how to get to heaven. And, you know, the amazing thing is that most people, regardless of who they are, what their upbringing, what their background is, most people respond to the truth when we speak the truth in love.

[19 : 19] When you tell somebody the truth in love, they will respond to it. They might not respond the way you want them to respond. Sometimes they don't respond the way you want them to respond. This young man, even though he was given the truth, even though Jesus lovingly told him the truth, not even the truth was enough to save him. Because when Jesus looked at this young man and loved this young man and let this young man know the truth, even though Jesus spoke the truth in love, what did he do? He walked away. He walked away from Jesus, the only way to heaven. He walked away. He responded by rejecting the truth. And that's how it often is sometimes. That's how it often is because we can lovingly look at people and lovingly invite people and lovingly speak to people and lovingly let them know the truth. Because we want them to know the truth. But sometimes, sometimes, and I find this hard as a minister, I find it hard speaking the truth to you all the time in love. I find it hard when people respond by rejecting the truth.

Because what you want for someone more than anything else in all the world is for them to know how to get to heaven. And you know, look at verse 22. We're told there that this young man, he's disheartened by what Jesus said. And he goes away sorrowful. Why? Because he has great possessions.

You know, our English Bibles, they don't explain or express the emotions of this young man clearly. Because it wasn't just that he was disheartened by what Jesus said. The word is actually that he was disgusted by what Jesus said. He was shocked and stunned and absolutely surprised as to what Jesus was telling him. So much so that it leads to another emotion. Not that he was sad or sorrowful, but it literally means that he was irritated. He was irate with Jesus. Totally insulted.

Because he didn't like what he heard. He didn't like what Jesus had to say to him. He didn't like what he heard, but he heard the truth. And maybe you don't like what you're hearing this morning. But my friend, it's the truth.

I cannot preach anything else to you but the truth. And we need to hear the truth. Because we are surrounded by a world of opinions and fake news. And yet we need to hear the truth.

[22 : 02] Because as Jesus says on another occasion, it's only the truth that will set you free. It's only the truth that will set you free. And so as we think about this question, how do I get to heaven?

We see a young man who thought he was righteous for heaven. And yet when he speaks to Jesus, the only way to heaven, Jesus says, you've been rejected by heaven. But then we see lastly and briefly, disciples who are rebuked about heaven.

They're rebuked about heaven. So we see righteous for heaven, rejected by heaven, and rebuked about heaven. Rebuked about heaven. Look at verse 23.

Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, how difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God. And the disciples were amazed at his words, but Jesus said to them again, And children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God.

It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God. And they were exceedingly astonished and said to him, Then who can be saved?

[23 : 14] Jesus looked at them and said, With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God. Now, in the context and culture of first century Israel, riches and righteousness were seen as a symbol of God's goodness and God's grace.

To the point that riches and righteousness, they were seen as a guarantee for getting to heaven. So if you're rich, or if you're righteous, self-righteous, you're guaranteed to get to heaven, which of course is completely wrong.

That's why Jesus repeatedly affirms here, he says it not once, but twice. He says that it's impossible, impossible for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God unless they come through the only way, Jesus.

But as Jesus teaches there, With man it is impossible, but not with God. All things are possible with God. It's certainly difficult for a rich person, or a self-righteous person to enter the kingdom of God.

In fact, Jesus says there, 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. Why? Because they are relying upon their riches. They're relying upon their righteousness, their self-righteousness, as a guarantee for getting to heaven.

[24 : 35] They're relying upon these things in life, not Jesus. They're comfortable in life, to the point that they're casual and careless with their salvation.

And you know, that's often the danger. That's often the danger that we are comfortable in life, that we become casual and careless about our salvation. But you know, it wasn't just this young man here who was astonished and astounded at what Jesus was saying.

The disciples are absolutely astonished. They're astounded as to what Jesus was saying to this young, rich, and righteous man. They're so astonished. They're so astounded at Jesus.

They say, well, if he can't be saved, who can be saved? If this rich and righteous young man can't be guaranteed a place in heaven, then who can be Jesus?

Who can be saved? But you know, for Jesus, it was actually astonishing and astounding that the disciples were asking such a question.

[25 : 43] Because Jesus had literally just told them who can be saved and how to be saved. He had just told them. You go to the few verses before this account of the rich young man.

Because before this young man came up to Jesus or ran up to Jesus, we read about children running up to Jesus. But the disciples were told that they rebuked the children for running up to Jesus.

Then in verse 14, it says, when Jesus saw them rebuking them, when Jesus saw the disciples rebuking the children, he was indignant. He was angry. He was irate and said to them, let the children come to me.

Do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.

Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it. You know, my friend, the rebuke from heaven was all because the kingdom of God, it's not about relying upon riches.

[26 : 53] It's not about relying upon self-righteousness. It's all about receiving Jesus. The kingdom of God is not about relying upon riches or righteousness. It's about receiving Jesus.

And so the answer to the question, how do I get to heaven? It's not a difficult answer. It's not an impossible answer to understand. It's very, actually very simply. And that's why we say to the children, recognize you're a sinner.

Receive Jesus as your Savior. Recognize that you're a sinner. Receive Jesus as your Savior. How do I receive Jesus, Murdo? Well, Jesus tells us, like a little child.

How do you receive Jesus like a little child? Not that you need to be innocent or that you need to be immature or that you need to be ignorant. No, we need to rely upon Jesus rather than our righteousness or our riches.

We need to depend upon our Savior for our salvation rather than ourselves. Because that's the thing about children. And we all know that about children.

[28 : 04] Those of you who work with children, you all know this. They're dependent. In fact, that's what we call them. We call them dependents. They're called dependents because they're completely dependent upon someone else for all that they receive.

Do I look at our little Matthew? He's eight months old, completely dependent. He can't feed himself, can't wash himself, can't clothe himself, can't look after himself, can't do anything for himself.

He's completely dependent. He has to rely upon someone else to protect him and to provide for him. Thankfully, he's got his mother and not just me. But you know, all he can do as a child is throw his arms wide open and cry for help.

All he can do is throw his arms wide open and cry for help. And you know, my friend, that's what Jesus is teaching us and telling us this morning. Because the answer to the question, how do I get to heaven, it's not a convoluted answer.

And it's not be a good person or be a sincere person. Neither does it rely upon your riches or your self-righteousness. It's very, very, very simple. Recognize you're a sinner and receive Jesus as your Savior by relying upon him with all your heart.

[29 : 24] Let's pull everything else back. How do you get to heaven? You recognize you're a sinner. You receive Jesus as your Savior.

And you rely upon him with all your heart. You do as a baby would do. You throw your arms wide open and you cry to Jesus for mercy.

That's how you get to heaven. That's the only way to heaven. So aren't you glad you came to church this morning to be reminded of how to get to heaven?

And I hope you'll come back next Sunday. May the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks for reminding us this morning of the wonder of who Jesus is and why Jesus came.

That he came not only to open the way for us to heaven, but he also came to teach us how to get there. And that we cannot get there by ourselves. Or by our righteousness or our riches.

[30 : 46] But by simply relying upon him and him alone. And help us then, we pray, to come like little children. To come throwing our arms wide open and crying to Jesus for mercy, saying, Lord, save me.

Because Lord, we know that there is only one who can save us. Help us then, we pray, to come with such humility, like little children, depending upon Jesus for all that he has done and that all that he continues to do.

Bless us, Lord, together, we pray. Help us to seek the Lord while he's to be found and ultimately call upon him while he is near. Hear us then, we ask, for we ask it in Jesus' name and for his sake.

Amen. Well, we're going to bring our service to a conclusion this morning. We're going to sing to God's praise in Psalm 73. Psalm 73.

It's in the Scottish Psalter, page 316. After the service this morning, there's tea and coffee in the church hall, so please do stay behind if you can. There's tea and coffee, so just go out the door, turn right, and there should be tea and coffee available for you.

[32 : 04] Psalm 73. As we said, all of our Psalms focus upon the theme of heaven. And here in Psalm 73, we're reminded that there's no one in heaven like the Lord.

He says there in verse 25, Whom have I in the heavens high but thee, O Lord, alone? And in the earth whom I desire, besides thee there is none.

My flesh and heart doth faint and fail, but God doth fail me never, for of my heart God is the strength and portion forever. So we'll sing Psalm 73 from verse 23 down to the verse mark 26, and we'll stand to sing, if you're able, to God's praise.

Nevertheless, continually, O Lord, I am with thee, thou dost behold by my right hand and still upholdest me.

Thou with thy counsel while I live will be called, conduct and guide, and to thy glory afterward receive me whom have I in the heavens high.

[34 : 10] but thee, O Lord, O Lord, alone. And in the earth whom I desire, besides thee there is none.

my flesh and heart doth faint and fail, but God doth fail me never, for of my heart God is the strength and portion forever.

the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forevermore.

Amen. The peace of the Lord