

Christ Presbyterian Church
Edina, Minnesota
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Matt Moberg
Every Day: The Transformative Gospel
Mark 10:17-31

My name is Matt Moberg and I work here at CPC. I'm excited about the text this morning. We're talking about the story of the rich, young ruler. We're talking specifically about what Pastor Rich told us about, trusting in Christ, so if you will join me, let's jump straight into Mark 10:17-27. It reads like this:

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: 'You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother.'" **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 to enter the kingdom of God! **25** It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for the rich 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 human beings this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God."

Will you pray with me?

Father, we give You this morning, Lord. I ask though that You would move through the words, through our ears, in our hearts, through your texts, God, that You would speak to us, Lord. I thank You that we have the freedom to come and worship You and get to know You further. You are a gift, God. Help us to trust You more and more. In Jesus' Name, all God's children said,

[All:] Amen.

I'm going to be honest with you. I'm not entirely sure what's going to come out of my mouth this morning. I have been up for the past ten hours. I was up at 3:45 this morning with a screaming child who had the fullest of diapers. And as I sat with him in the living room with him screaming, I didn't know how to calm him. I tried every trick in the book and started thinking to myself, well, eventually we are going to get past this stage. Eventually, I'm going to enter into the time of bliss where Wyatt, my son, and I are going to have a great relationship. He's not going to be a burden

for me. I'm not going to burden him. We're going to have a full and satisfying relationship. Then I came to church this morning, and in the prayer room out there when we were praying for the service, I met a wonderful lady named Sue. I was kind of explaining to her what I went through, the tragedy of this morning, and this wonderful lady said some hateful and awful things. She said, "I have a couple of twenty-year-olds and it never really changes." So thank you, Sue, for that pick-me-up.

Does anybody else ever feel like you are one thing, one relationship, one position, one missing piece, one step away from having full satisfaction, from having the complete fulfillment you have been looking for? Do you ever find that no matter what you do, there is some shade of discontent or disappointment that is attached to it? Whether you have spent your entire life trying to be the leader of the free world, only to realize after your first term that it changed your hair color 50 shades of gray, [Slide shown.] or you hear that Taco Bell is coming out with a breakfast and only after eating the waffle taco, you learn that it has taken 30 years off your life? [Slide shown.] It seems like there is a disappointment attached to everything and yet we keep believing that we are about one step, one thing, away from having peace and being completely full of bliss and joy without a care in the world.

One of the reasons why I think we perpetuate this myth is because I think we see it in each other. We see it in friends, in our families, in people we don't know. We see it in celebrities and think, those are people who have it all together. They don't have to wake up in the morning with kids. They don't have a care in the world. They don't have anything that stresses them out. Tom Brady is the guy who does that for me. Tom Brady, T12, is a man who seems to have it all together. If you were to assess Tom Brady using the value systems of our world that we often subscribe to, whether intentionally or not, you would say Tom Brady has never experienced what stress is like. He has never shed a tear or had any problems. Tom Brady has three more Super Bowl rings than you do. He's had a lot of success. He's married to a supermodel. People say he's good-looking. My wife doesn't. She's very content with her husband. Tom Brady makes about \$26.5 million every year, which is really the only thing Tom and I have in common. Tom Brady, it would seem, has the full package and has it all together so I was surprised, maybe you will be, too, when I heard him say these things in an interview from a few years ago.

[Video begins.]

[Steve Kroft, 60 Minutes interviewer:] Tom Brady, the quarterback of the New England Patriots, is not only one of the NFL's best players, he is one of the NFL's great stories. At the tender age of 30, he has already won three Super Bowls, an accomplishment that ranks him with some of the best quarterbacks ever to play the game, and he's having one of the greatest seasons in pro football history. When we first reported on him back in 2005, he seemed underrated and almost overlooked. He doesn't have the arm of Peyton Manning. He doesn't have tattoos and he doesn't take steroids and he's never held out for more money. All he knows how to do is win! It's what you always wanted!

[Brady:] And you're right. It is. I didn't think it came with all the other baggage though.

[Kroft:] In addition to his success on the field and his sex appeal off it, there is also the \$60 million, ten-year contract to play with the Patriots.

[Brady:] I'm making more money now than I ever thought I could ever make in my entire life.

[Kroft:] But with all that money, fame, and career accomplishments, we were surprised to hear this from him.

[Brady:] Why do I have three Super Bowl rings and still think there's something greater out there for me? I mean, maybe a lot of people would say, "Hey man, this is what it is!" I reached my goal, my dream, my life. Me, I think, God, it's got to be more than this!

[Kroft:] What's the answer?

[Brady:] I wish I knew! I wish I knew.

[Video ends.]

It's interesting, isn't it? Now the Christians among us, if you're like me, you want to run up to Tom. You want to pinch those adorable cheeks and say, "Tom, it's Jesus that you're missing. Jesus is the X Factor that you haven't quite found yet. He is the *more than this* that you have been seeking and you haven't found.

You would quote to him John 6:35 and you would say, "Jesus is the Bread of Life", and then, you're not going to hunger. You're not going to thirst. You're going to be fully satisfied in Christ." But as you are quoting to him, you're going to remember the text that we just read and remember that rich young ruler who had it all together. He had the full package and he was looking in Jesus' eyes. They were sharing words. Yet it doesn't appear that he is fully satisfied. At the end of the conversation, it says his face fell. He is sad and he even ends up walking away.

I think at the heart of humanity, we have this default condition of discontent and in our doubts, we sing that old Gospel song written by U2 that says we've been looking high, we've been looking low, we've tried money and power and politics and sex and control and country clubs. We've tried it all. "But I still haven't found what I'm looking for." We keep falling short. The good news of this morning is that I do believe that Jesus is the Bread of Life. I do believe that in Him, you will find fulfillment. You will find the joy. You will find what you've been looking for. I think that what Jesus offers is an unlikely path to satisfaction. I think that's the best thing about Jesus, that Jesus doesn't think like us. He doesn't behave like us. He doesn't strategize like us. The very fact that Jesus is not like us, *that's* the good news of the Gospel right there. So I want to go to this text and look at it because I think it's got an amazing gift for you inside of it, Mark 10.

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?"

Let me ask you a question. When was the last time that you saw a wealthy person, a young, influential, powerful person, run up and fall on his knees before a person of poverty and say, "I need help"? It's an amazing image here of desperation. It's a beautiful thing that we don't see enough in the real world. There are two important things that this young man says here that I want to highlight and look at. The first thing is, he says, "**What must I do?**" Religion to this man is a task. It's a chore chart. It's a list of rules and things and rituals, these things that we must

do. We get up in the morning and we do this and we do that and that's how I'm going to accomplish eternal life. But in Mark 10, Jesus says, "If you want life, you are going to have to lose your life." We hear those words and still continue wanting to impress Jesus. We want to perform for Jesus. We want to do the right things, but God is much more interested in *who* you are than what you do. He cares a lot more about your character than he does about your career. Who you are and who you are becoming with Jesus is a lot more than what you are doing. In this passage, Jesus is pulling this man from religion to reality to relationship.

The second thing is actually wrapped up with the doing. It's actually the question of, "**How do I find eternal life?**" This is a Jewish man. He is likely to be a Pharisee. He is steeped in the understanding of the Jewish faith and he knows that the Jewish faith doesn't talk a lot about the afterlife, *olam ha'ba*, the world to come. There is a belief in the resurrected bodies and that there is a world to come but "we don't know enough about it." So genuinely, this guy is saying, "Help me understand something that I don't know enough about." Here's the wonderful thing. This man is desperate for something that he doesn't understand and he is really unsatisfied about what he does understand. Does that sound familiar to anyone? Have you ever been let down with all of your familiar strategies, by the things that you do know? Have you felt that angst that you need to press into the mysteries of God? I need to learn to trust that which I do not understand. This guy has come to Jesus in a beautiful and honest and vulnerable way. I would like my life to look more like that. The text goes on.

18 "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone."

"You just called me good. You just called me God." Jesus is pressing into the heart behind the questions of this young man. Here is the important thing to distinguish right off the bat. If this young man *is* calling Jesus God and only God is good, then everything else in our lives, our possessions, they're not good. They're *something else*. But if he is calling Jesus a good teacher, a human being who has found a way to be good, then it's promoting the lie that we can find salvation, we can find fulfillment, satisfaction, all on our own. Human beings have the capability of doing good, being good, so we really don't need a Savior. Jesus is asking the heart behind the question right off the bat. He goes on to say,

19 "You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother.'"

Hey, how many Commandments are in the Ten Commandments? Tough question? It is important to understand what the Commandments were all about. Post-flood, post-fall, God instituted this 10-step program to reconcile the relationship between man and God, the Ten Commandments that we know. The problem is, the Ten Commandments were initiated 1,700 years before Jesus and for the past 1,700 years, not one human being was capable of pulling it off. Nobody going 10 for 10. So then Jesus steps in and He *does* fulfill them. He fulfills all 10. He goes 10 for 10. But what's more interesting about this text right here is that I'm counting six Commandments. Why isn't Jesus listing all 10? This is a big deal in this context. If He is a good teacher, if He is a holy rabbi, He should really know the Ten Commandments. I mean, you can imagine His disciples in the corner, saying "Jesus, you're embarrassing us right now." You can see Peter just kind of texting Jesus the four missing Commandments.

20 "Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy." **21** Jesus looked at him and loved him.

Looking for Mark is a big deal. It's a word that carries weight. It's Mark's way of saying, "Jesus forgave the young man. Jesus sees this man and understands what he is all about." It says that Jesus looked at him and loved him. This is the only time in the synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, where Jesus has ever looked at a particular person and said that He loved him. That is significant. Jesus says,

"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."

So the man is declaring his own blamelessness and yet Jesus says, "You're missing one thing." Now Jesus said six Commandments. I didn't participate in the quiz bowl in high school. I wasn't a mathematician by any stretch of the imagination, but if Jesus said only six of the Commandments, there are *four* things missing, not *one*. The equation is not adding up here. Jesus is missing more than one thing. He is missing four things. When Charlton Heston went up on that mountain and received the Law, he received Ten Commandments, so what are the four missing Commandments here? It's important to take note of them.

What is Jesus not saying and what is the relevance of that today? Here's what's missing. "1., You shall have no other God before Me. 2., You shall not make for yourself an idol. 3., Don't you dare misuse or abuse the name of the Lord. 4., Keep the Sabbath holy." You might wonder about Jesus not saying these. Is He is saying, "Forget the Law, it's over, we're not held accountable for the Law anymore"? Well, no, because in Matthew 5, Jesus says,

¹⁷ "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."

So it's not a finishing off of the Law; it's a fulfillment of it. And what Jesus is saying is, if He is missing four Commandments here, if you look at what He is saying to this young man, He is saying there are four *new* Commandments. He says, "**Go**," that's one. "**Sell everything**," that's two. "**Give to the poor**," that's three. "**And then come and follow Me**." Jesus is inviting this young man, not to abolish the Law, not to flee from all things Law, but instead to understand that the Law and the prophets, everything that has been said up until this time, point to Jesus. So if you want the fulfilled life, if you want to live the life that you've been striving to live, that for 2,000 years, nobody has been able to go 10 for 10, if you want the fulfillment of going 10 for 10, you need to come and walk with Jesus. Jesus looks at those missing Commandments and says, "Well, if you aren't going to have any other gods before me, you need to get rid of some stuff. It's all about redirecting your religion, your whole perspective on life, the way you've been playing out your life and coming toward Me."

22 At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

Jesus is the great physician, which means that He gives out individual pills, all right? So Jesus prescribes for this man, "You need to cut money out." Maybe He's asking something different of you. Maybe there is something else between you and your ability to trust that Jesus is enough. "At this the man's face fell." The word for "fell" means that his face clouded over. He got confused, and why wouldn't he? "He went away sad." He grieved this moment. Jesus has taken

his religion and his life, and flipped it upside down. Spending your life in pursuit of something and then having someone say that you are doing it wrong will cause you to grieve. That will cause you to cloud over a little bit.

People read this story and they say, "This man is rejecting Jesus. He has no time for Jesus. He has walked away from faith." But it doesn't say that in the Gospel story. It just says that he got sad. I would offer to you that this man right here is having an honest process of what a transformation ought to look like. I think we have a broken theology sometimes when we think God makes us sad and that if God is asking us to take something out of our lives that might inflict a little bit of pain, then it really isn't from God.

I believe that God can make saints out of sadness. I believe that on the other side of our grieving, we are going to find incredible blessings. Tell me this, what in your life have you experienced that is really good that didn't actually have some kind of cost to it? My sister's boyfriend is training right now to make it into the NFL. That means that every morning he's up at 6 a.m. and he's busting his tail. Lifting. Running. He's careful of what he eats. He hates it. He's grieving it, but it's part of the process because he can't just sit on his butt and eat Pringles all day. I think if anything is good in life, it's going to come with a cost. You want to learn guitar? You better be prepared to have your fingers torn up a little bit. You want to be a great doctor? You better be prepared to pay the cost of med school and I believe there's some homework attached to that. You want to get in shape? You've got to cut Krispy Kremes out of your life and nobody knows grieving more than a person who has to cut Krispy Kremes.

23 Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!"

You can hear the compassion as He is standing with His disciples watching the young man accepting that his God is saying he has to cut stuff out. Jesus said, "Look how hard it is for them, those people who are trusting in things outside of Me, how hard it is just to cut that out."

24 The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! **25** It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for the rich to enter the kingdom of God."

I imagine Peter kind of in the background going, "Okay, so I flatten the humps a little bit and I tie the legs. Maybe we can slide him through the eye of the needle. There's got to be a way we can work around this deal."

26 The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, "Who then can be saved?"

"How is this going to work out? How are we possibly going to find a way to salvation?"

27 Jesus looked at them and said, "With human beings this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God."

"With man it is impossible but all things are possible with God." Jesus is speaking to the man and saying, "You need to focus. It's not about your 10-step programs any more. It's not about your 7 habits of highly and wholly effective people. It's about coming to Me and trusting in Me.

Trust in Me that I am the only one that matters.” And our response is, “Well, “the only one who matters,” I can’t pay the mortgage with that. I can’t buy food with *things that matter*. What am I supposed to do?” Trusting in Jesus is a complete challenge to our paradigm and how we view life. I think one of the reasons why it is so hard for the rich young ruler, why it’s hard for us to just abandon and trust Christ that He actually has our best interests at hand, is because treating God like a rule book is a little bit easier. It’s easier to have a formulaic faith so we can walk around on our tiptoes as opposed to trusting God and running around in an abundant life. I don’t believe you can live the abundant life on your tiptoes.

We want it a lot easier. We want to keep going to church. We want to keep praying before our meals. We want to do the bare minimum. We want to meet the rules. It is hard to trust. I believe one of the things Jesus is saying is, “I really don’t want preventatives, piety. I don’t just want you just to read the rules, respond to the rules and make a religion out of that. I want you to come and follow Me. I want a relationship with you. I want more than what your history has given you.” Jesus doesn’t *need* something from you but He really does desire something for you. He desires your very best. The ruler was bent on righteousness and lived it very carefully. We wonder, did he have it in his gut to follow the wandering rabbi?

In a couple of weeks, we celebrate the cross of Christ, a very significant day for those of us who call Jesus *Lord*. I think about the story of Christ and about how when He came, there was an expectation on the Messiah that He would come and He would do things. He would redeem Israel. He would defeat Rome and He would save us all. What happens though is, He is betrayed by Israel, He is defeated *by* Rome, but He still stands to save us all.

The power of the cross and how I like to view it oftentimes, especially in this context, is that Jesus came to us and we were all sitting in a jail cell, stuck on legalism instead of love, wrapped up in our strategies of how we can find success and satisfaction, comfortable inside the formulaic traits. Jesus comes and puts the key in the cell door and says, “If you want more, if you want what you’ve been missing, the key is in the door. You are free to leave and you’re free to come with Me.” I think it is an important question to ask, do you want more? Do you want God? Do you believe that Christ really does have the fulfillment that He promises for you? When He says He is the Bread of Life, do you buy it? It might cause you to grieve, having to amputate some things out of your life, but I think that grieving can be a holy process, an important process. Let me pray.

Father God, Lord, I thank You for the invitation You give us, God, to follow You. I thank You for Your love. I thank You for the way that You have plans for us. You want to give us the fulfillment of You. Help us understand, Lord, that You-plus-nothing equals everything. In Jesus’ Name, all God’s children said,

[All:] Amen.

The nature of oral presentations makes them less precise than written materials; any lack of attribution is unintentional, and we wish to credit all those who have contributed to this sermon. Soli Deo Gloria.