

Sermon: Mark 10:13-16, 17-31

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Sermon text and audio available for download at www.waitara.anglican.asn.au

How good are you?

- This is the Burj Khalifa building in Dubai.

It is the tallest building in the world. 828 metres high. It cost \$1.5 billion. It has 900 apartments, over 160 floors and 3 million square feet of space. It also has the world's fastest escalators which travel at 64km/hr!

Now, let's imagine that everyone in the world lived in this tall building... Just for fun! And let's imagine that the level you live on, from 1 to 160, depends on how good you are. The good people live right at the top. The bad people live near the bottom.

And imagine that every time you did good, you moved up another floor. And every time you lied or cheated, you moved down a floor. A bit like a game of snakes and ladders.

Now, if this was the case, then the rich man we meet in the story in Mark 10, would be living right near the top! Because this man is a really 'good' man. Even the disciples think he's a good man. And he was wealthy. And many people would believe that God had blessed him with wealth because he's so good! Plus he tells us that he obeys God's commandments. This is a good guy. Living right up near level 160.

Now let's imagine that Jesus is in heaven on the **roof** of this tall building. And this rich man comes to Jesus and he says: Look, I'm a good guy. I live on one of the top floors. How do I get to the roof? How do I get to heaven? How do I get eternal life? What must I do? What good things will get me from where I am now, right to the top?

And what does Jesus say? He says: "Come on up." Come on up to the roof. Just walk out of your apartment and come up to the roof. Just one thing: leave all your stuff behind.

"What stuff?" The man says.

"All the stuff you own." Jesus replies. All your possessions. Your wealth. Your money. You won't need that. Just come on out of your apartment, and come on up to the roof. You're welcome to come up. Just leave all your stuff behind."

I wonder if you see the problem with what the man actually asked Jesus. Verse 17:

- *"What must I **do** to **inherit** eternal life?"* That's what he says to Jesus. What must I DO to INHERIT?

It's strange because you don't DO anything for an inheritance. The way you inherit something is to be a part of the family. And what Jesus is explaining to this rich, good man, is that he can't DO anything to get the inheritance of eternal life. Being "good" will not get you eternal life. No matter how high up in the building you live, there is only one way to get to the roof. What is that way? Leave all the other stuff behind. Verse 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.'"*

One thing you lack. **Let go of the security you have in the things of this world.** Leave your apartment and come up to the roof. You don't need anything. You don't need possessions. You don't need money. You don't need a long list of good things you've done. Leave it all behind and come to me. And how does the man respond? Verse 22:

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

Jesus really loved this man. But he could not let go of his wealth.

Where is your security?

This is not a story about money. It's a story about our security. For this rich man, his security was in his money. And he could not let go of that. And Jesus says, verse 25:

- *"It's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."*

In other words, it's impossible. It's impossible to enter God's kingdom when we have our security in the things of this world. And that is the great deception that Satan loves to fool us with. Satan loves for us to feel safe with the things of this world. He loves it when money makes us feel safe. When a secure job makes us feel safe. When our relationships make us feel safe. And he loves it even more when we make ourselves feel safe. When we find security by trusting ourselves. Depending on ourselves. Because the more we find security in the things and the people of this world, the less we need to find security in God.

- **III** – A friend of mine has a daughter who had a little security blanket when she was about 2 years old.

She used to carry this little blanket around everywhere. She could not leave home without it. She slept with it, ate with it, took it everywhere she went. But as she got older, she *still* could not let go of it. Her mother realised that she needed help to let go of this blanket. So every day, her mother cut a little piece off the blanket while her daughter was asleep. Every day she cut off another little piece and the blanket got smaller. And smaller. And smaller. Until one day, it was smaller than her hand. A tiny little square. And she said to her daughter – "Why are you carrying that little thing around? You don't need that!" And her daughter looked at it, and threw it away immediately. Bit by bit, her mother had helped her break her dependence on that security blanket. Verse 26-27:

- *"The disciples were even more amazed and said to each other, 'Who then can be saved?' Jesus looked at them and said: 'With man this is impossible. But not with God. All things are possible with God.'"*

We need God's help to break our dependence on the things of this world. God is the one who is able to help us let go of our security blankets. God is the one who is able to help us. No matter how good we are, being good won't get us eternal life. We **inherit** eternal life, as a **gift**, when we simply put our security in God instead of the things of the world. And only God is able to help us do that. It's impossible without God.

Are you a child?

Only God is able to help us come to Jesus like a little child – let's go back to verse 15 – Jesus said:

- *"I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."*

How do children receive things? With nothing to offer in return. Children receive things as a gift. They have nothing to offer in return. If you've ever bought a 1 year old a gift, you'll notice that they don't feel the need to pay you back. They don't go out and buy you a gift to pay for the gift that you've given them! Children accept a gift as a gift. And that is what God wants to do for us. He wants to help us to let go of the security we have in the things of this world, and just accept the eternal life he offers us as a free gift. To step out of that building and just go up to the roof – and we don't need to bring anything with us. We don't have to offer God anything.

And what does Jesus say will happen when we accept that gift and depend on God instead of the things of this world? From verse 29 – He says that when you leave all that stuff behind, when you stop depending on those things, you'll find that God provides you with a whole lot more than the world offers. He will not only provide you with all you need in this world, along with the persecution that comes with following him, but he will also guarantee you eternal life.

Let me finish with two things to think about.

- **Are you...**

- 1. First, are you challenged? Are you **challenged to ask for God's help** to break free from the security blankets we have in this world. To understand what things in this world we put our trust in instead of God and to ask for his help to break that dependence. Maybe it's wealth, prosperity, power, success – where do you find security in this world?
- 2. Second, are you **encouraged by the grace of God**? This passage is all about grace. Jesus wants us to hear that eternal life is a **free gift**. That it's not something we can **earn** by being good. That it's not something that depends on us or what we've done. That it's a gift God wants to give us freely. A gift that we need to simply accept, like a child. A gift of God's grace.

- **III** – Let me finish with one of my favourite images.

Imagine a child stuck in a ball pit in a play gym. They can't get out. And their Father comes over to help them out. He reaches out his hand, but the child can't grab it, because she's holding on to all these little balls. Her Father wants to lift her out, but she won't let go. And he just says to her, again and again, let go of that, and grab my hand and you'll be free. Let go. Take my hand. Be free.

With God all things are possible. With God, it is possible for us to let go of things that we hold on to so tightly in this world. And when we manage to do that, and trust God, he lifts us up, and he sets us free.

Let's pray.