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Jesus Knows How Hard It Is!

Mark 10:17-31

What is the hardest thing you have had to do or go through in your life? Some women may answer, giving birth. For some women every birth for them was difficult. For other women birth was easy. For some people, the death of a child or the death of their spouse was the hardest thing they had to go through. For others, it could have been a divorce. For some, this aging process is hard. Aging can restrict us. We lose our eyesight, hearing, some abilities, our minds and our independence. There are many difficult things that people go through in life. Life is not always easy. When I think about the hardest thing, **for Christians it is** truly living the holy life that God has designed for us. There are times that living the Christian life is fun and easy. Then there are other times it is extremely hard having to die to our sinful nature and not say, do or even think those things we should not. It is easier to act like worldly people, saying things that Jesus would never say, being rude, hateful and mean to people. As followers of Jesus Christ, we are to act in a way that shows compassion and concern. When Jesus was in His greatest pain and suffering, He was praying, *“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do”* (Luke 23:34). The godly, Christian life can be the hardest thing to do and go through, yet it can also bring us the greatest joy and abundant life (John 10:10). In our scripture today, a man comes to Jesus seeking an answer to life. What Jesus told him was too hard for him to do. Then Jesus makes statements that shock His disciples and makes them reevaluate their own lives and their service to Jesus. How would you handle a person like this?

Mark 10:17 *“Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, ‘Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?’”* Jesus was walking on the road with His disciples. They were heading south to Jericho and then ultimately to Jerusalem for the Passover. A man came running up to Jesus and knelt before Him. This would make it impossible for Jesus to keep walking. Jesus had to stop. Either this man was a bit controlling or greatly concerned. Luke records that he was a ruler (18:18). Matthew records he was young (19:20). All three gospel writers include that he was rich. This man came with a good question to the Good Teacher. What must he do so that he could be given eternal life? Either this man wanted approval, a guarantee that all the good things he had already done were enough to earn him an inheritance of eternal life or this man realized even though he had done so well in keeping some of the commandments, he still lacked something.

Verses 18-19 *“So Jesus said to him, ‘Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not*

murder, 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Do not defraud,' 'Honor your father and your mother.'” Jesus began by asking a question back to the man. Who is good? Most of us in here would consider ourselves good. Who is good? **Really, only God is good!** Goodness is God’s nature. Everything about God is good. Everything God thinks, says and does is good. People are not like this. Their basic nature is not good. It is selfish. We can do many good things. It is when God through His Holy Spirit comes and lives in His followers that we possess God’s good nature. We can be good like God when we let God’s Spirit control us and lead us. This can be hard to do consistently. We keep wanting to take back control of our lives. Instead, God in His goodness should control us, His followers and live through us all the time. Do you know the commandments? Six are mentioned here. They all relate to people dealing with people. How are you doing in these areas? Jesus will deal with the man concerning the first two commandments next. They are to have no other gods, and do not bow down or serve other gods.

Verse 20 *“And he answered and said to Him, ‘Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth.’”* The man is saying that since he was trained in the law, he has kept the law. He may have sinned as a child, but it seems to him that did not count because he did not know better. The apostle Paul would have disagreed with this ruler (Romans 7:9-12). Since he was trained right, he has been a good person to other people. He is either hoping that his goodness towards others will get him into heaven and wants confirmation that it is true or he knows there is something else required that he does not know about. If this man is a religious ruler, he should know. Is being good to others, good enough? No, because we are not good. **All people are sinful though all people do good things** (Romans 3:23). No one is purely good through and through except for God. Because we are not purely good, we need a perfect Savior to pay the debt for our sins and forgive us. This requires all people to believe in and trust God’s only provision for our sins. God provided the perfect holy, sacrifice for our sins, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Verse 21 *“Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, ‘One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.’”* Jesus looked at this man with love. God loves those who are lost in their misunderstanding and in their sin. He did not tell this man you have done well. Jesus did not tell this man to give some or all of his money to Him. Jesus was not saying that giving everything away or becoming poor is a requirement for salvation. Jesus was exposing this man’s sin. Yes, this man did many good things to people. He kept the law, but he loved his wealth more than God. He trusted in his wealth more than trusting God. This man’s identity, even as a ruler, was in his wealth not in God. Jesus challenged the man to

love God more than his wealth. Jesus knows that just saying words of commitment are not enough. It is too easy to say things. Jesus wanted to see this man's love for God demonstrated. How does God want you to demonstrate your love for Him? He wants more than words. He wants accountability. He wants action. He wants proof.

Verse 22 *“But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.”* Jesus challenged this man to do the hardest thing in life. He had to die to his way of living. Jesus told him to give up his riches and his rich lifestyle. That is hard to do. Jesus promised him eternal treasures in heaven, but that was not enough. This man never got to the point of taking up his cross and following Jesus.

Verse 23 *“Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, ‘How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!’”* This is a shocking statement because it goes against what the Jews were taught. Jews believed riches were a blessing from God. With the more riches a person had, the more good they could do. The more good they do, the better chance of getting into heaven. **Is this true?** No!

Verses 24-26 *“And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, ‘Children, how hard it is for those who **trust in riches** to enter the kingdom of God! 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.’ And they were greatly astonished, saying among themselves, ‘Who then can be saved?’”* The disciples were shocked at Jesus' statements. They thought if rich people who are blessed by God cannot get into heaven, then who can? Jesus clarified His statement. Those who trust in their riches will find it hard to get into heaven. How do we know who trusts in their riches? We do not know but God knows. Rich or poor, our actions reveal what or who we are trusting for salvation, whether it is our good actions, ourselves or God's grace.

Verse 27 *“But Jesus looked at them and said, ‘With men **it** is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible.’”* What does “**it**” refer to? It refers to getting into heaven. Any effort by a person, man or woman, rich or poor, Jew or Gentile, no one can do any good deed to earn eternal life. Only God makes eternal life possible. He did all the work through a perfect life, sacrificial death and His resurrection from the dead. *“Who then can be saved?”* All who trust in God's work. Their lifestyle will show it. They do the hard things. They take up the cross. They follow Jesus. They endure persecution.

Verse 28 *“Then Peter began to say to Him, ‘See, we have left all and followed You.’”* Thank God for Peter. He said what all the disciples were thinking. They left everything and followed Jesus. It seems like the disciples were thinking that they

could earn eternal life by giving up everything. Is that how people get eternal life, by giving up everything? No. Although when we trust Jesus as our Savior, we need to turn away from a lifestyle of sin and turn to a lifestyle of obedience to Jesus. **Have you left your lifestyle of sin? Are you following Jesus?** (John 14:23-24)

Verses 29-30 “*So Jesus answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life.’*” How many of the disciples were sons, husbands and fathers? I do not think Jesus chose 12 bachelors who were only children whose parents had all died. No, that was the Pony Express. The disciples were family men. They were business owners. As Peter said. They had left all and followed Jesus. And Jesus had left everything in heaven to come to earth to die in our place in order to save us from the punishment for our sins.

If anyone knows how hard life is, Jesus knows. He knows life is difficult. He knows how difficult it is to follow Him. He knows there can be persecutions along the way. But God also greatly rewards those who are obedient to Him. Chose the narrow gate of faith in Jesus Christ (Matthew 7:14). Learn the ways of Jesus. You will not be disappointed. “*But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him*” (Hebrews 11:6).

Verse 31 “*But many who are first will be last, and the last first.*” God’s way are not our ways. God’s ways are not the way the world does things or sees things. God’s ways are very different. God’s ways are always good ways. His ways may cost us everything, but **His rewards**, as someone has said, **are out of this world!**

Questions to ask yourself: Are you trying to earn your way to heaven or are you trusting God’s finished work for your salvation? Are you living like worldly people? Or are you learning God’s ways to live?

Actions to take: Carefully follow Jesus’ teachings and manner of life.

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