

## 12. First will be last and the last first

3/19/2006

'The Bachelor,' 'Survivors,' 'Big Brother,' 'The Apprentice,' 'The Amazing Race' and 'Fear Factor' to name a few. What do they have in common? Of course, they are all so-called reality shows. Even though they call themselves reality shows, but they are very far from reality. For short-lived fame and money, the contestants would do just about anything including making themselves fools.

Another common thing is that these contestants would do anything to beat the other people even if they have to cheat. They all want to be the first and winners.

Is it wrong for us to be the winner and the first? Yes and no. Yes, if that is the only goal in our lives. Because it becomes our idol. No, as we have studies in chapter 9, Jesus Himself taught us that if there is anyone who wants to be the greatest in the Kingdom of God, he should be the servant of all. This is the concept that goes against the grain of the world and our selfish nature.

Jesus is going to bring this valuable lesson back to us this morning:  
"First will be last and the last first."

### A. WHAT MUST I DO TO INHERIT ETERNAL LIFE?

*Mark 10:17-22 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?" 18 So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. 19 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.' " 20 And he answered and said to Him, "Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth." 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." 22 But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.*

This young man had it all. He was young, powerful and rich. Probably handsome, too. Some of you single ladies are thinking, "What is his cell phone number?"

With all of his fine qualities, the young man was very superficial in his views of spiritual things. He certainly had a shallow view of salvation, because he thought that he could do something to earn eternal life. This was a common belief in that day among the Jews, and it is very common today. Most unsaved people think that God will one day add up their good works and their bad works. If their good works outweigh their bad works, they will get into heaven. WRONG, thousand times WRONG!

The focus of the man's question is "what shall I do". He thought eternal life was a matter of earning and deserving, not of relationship with God and people around him. Behind this good-works approach to salvation is a shallow view of sin, man, the Bible, Jesus Christ and salvation. Sin is rebellion against the holy God. It is not simply an action. It is an inward attitude that exalts man and defies God.

*Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*

This title 'Good Teacher' was never applied to other Rabbis in Jesus' day, because it implied sinlessness, a complete goodness. Only God was called "good" by ancient rabbis. Jesus was not denying that He is the Good Teacher. But He wanted this man to realize that he was talking to God Himself.

The first four commandments are labeled 'Pietas' and has to do with man's relationship to God. The next six are labeled 'Probitas' and has to do with man's relationship with man.

Jesus is not telling us that we have to have no money to enter into the Kingdom of God. To this young man, his money was his god. Jesus wanted him to remove that idol from his life so that he could have eternal life. The young ruler did not see himself as a condemned sinner before the holy God. Because he measured obedience only by external actions and not by inward attitudes. As far as his actions were concerned, he was blameless. If that was the case, he wouldn't have come to Jesus from the beginning. Obviously, he knew he was missing out something, the TRUTH.

## **B. FIRST WILL BE LAST AND THE LAST FIRST**

*Mark 10:23-31 Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!" 24 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! 25 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." 26 And they were greatly astonished, saying among themselves, "Who then can be saved?" 27 But Jesus looked at them and said, "With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible." 28 Then Peter began to say to Him, "See, we have left all and followed You." 29 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, 30 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. 31 But many who are first will be last, and the last first."*

Jesus offered this man the gift of eternal life, but the young ruler turned it down. It is difficult to receive a gift when our fists are clenched around money and the things money can buy. He wanted to get salvation on his terms that is why he rejected the Savior who could give him eternal life.

Like most Jews thought that the possession of great wealth was the evidence of God's special blessing, many people today still cling to this error, in spite of the teachings from Christ.

The disciples thought the rich person and powerful people would get to heaven and receive first rewards from God. To anyone who looked, the rich young ruler stood first and the disciples stood last. But God didn't look at it the way man does.

Money makes a wonderful servant but a terrible master. If you have a lot of money, be grateful and use it for God's glory. But don't let the money possess you.

*1 Timothy 6:9-10 But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10 For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some*

*coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*

Late missionary Jim Elliot said, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

The Kingdom of God is not a matter of what we are going to get out, but who God is. Even though we don't deserve any good thing from God, He offers us eternal life through Jesus Christ, grace and mercy. We have to be complete idiots not to take His offers. Unfortunately, many people refuse Him.

### **C. JESUS' THIRD ANNOUNCEMENT FOR HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION**

*Mark 10:32-34 Now they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was going before them; and they were amazed. And as they followed they were afraid. Then He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them the things that would happen to Him: 33 "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles; 34 and they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again."*

As they drew near to Jerusalem, the disciples sensed the danger of their mission. Jesus was the number one in the Most Wanted of Israel by the Jewish leaders, and yet Jesus was going before them.

We sometimes don't think enough about the courage of Jesus. It took a tremendous amount of plain bravery for Him to walk straight towards His fate at Calvary. The courage of Jesus is especially amazing in light of our frequent cowardice as Christians, afraid to "stand up" for Jesus. He wasn't afraid to "stand up" for us.

Whenever Jesus talks about His death on the cross, he always includes His resurrection. Without His resurrection, we would worship a dead person just like any other religions.

*1 Corinthians 15:14-19 And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. 15 Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. 16 For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: 17 And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. 18 Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. 19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.*

### **D. THEY DON'T GET IT, DO THEY?**

*Mark 10:35-45 Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him, saying, "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask." 36 And He said to them, "What do you want Me to do for you?" 37 They said to Him, "Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory." 38 But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" 39 They said to Him, "We are able." So Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and with the baptism I am baptized with you will be baptized; 40 but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared." 41 And when the ten heard it, they began to be greatly displeased with James and John. 42 But*

*Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. 43 Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. 44 And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. 45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."*

In the light of our Lord's third announcement of His death & resurrection, we are embarrassed and ashamed to read of James and John asking for thrones. How could they be so callous and selfish? Peter had responded to the first announcement by arguing with Jesus. After the second announcement, the disciples responded by arguing among themselves over who was the greatest. These men seemed having no understanding of the meaning of the Atoning Sacrifice of Jesus. Let's not be hard on them, because we would have done the exact same thing.

The rest of the disciples were upset with James and John, not because what they asked was completely out of line, but because James and John beat them to punch.

Our Lord did not say that there is not a place on His right hand and left hand. He said the place is not something He would give to anyone for a fun of it. But those who are preparing themselves for that place will receive it.

Please listen carefully. We get eternal life as a gift from Jesus. But our places in heaven – we work for that. Salvation is free, but we work for a reward. If we are going to be rewarded by Him, we won't get it by twiddling our thumbs or wringing our hands or sitting in a pew. We'll have to serve Him and the Body of Christ to receive that.

If you are a born-again Christian, yet not serving the Lord Jesus in His work through the church and other ministries, by the authority of the Word of God, I can clearly tell you that you will not receive the rewards when you get heaven.

I asked you to underline v44-45. These verses are the theme of this Gospel according to Mark.

As it would turn out, both James and John took the cup and were baptized in suffering, but they each experienced it in different ways. James was the first apostle to be martyred according to Acts 12. According to tradition, Apostle John was never martyred, though he survived an attempt to kill him by immersion in a pot of boiling oil and later he was exiled to the Isle of Patmos.

## **E. NOW I SEE**

*Mark 10:46-52 Now they came to Jericho. As He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the road begging. 47 And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" 48 Then many warned him to be quiet; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" 49 So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called. Then they called the blind man, saying to him, "Be of good cheer. Rise, He is calling you." 50 And throwing aside his garment, he rose and came to Jesus. 51 So Jesus answered and said to him, "What do you want Me to do for you?" The blind man said to Him, "Rabboni, that I may receive my sight." 52 Then Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well." And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the road.*

The blind man had twice called him "Son of David" which was a national messianic title, but "Rabboni" was an expression of personal faith.

This account appears in Matthew and again in Luke. There are people who deny the inerrancy of Scripture because they can't reconcile the accounts of the Gospels here. Matthew mentions two blind men, but Mark centers his attention on Bartimaeus because he was the one who spoke out. I think the critic who tries to tear apart the accounts in the Gospels is the third blind man.

This is the last healing miracle recorded in Mark. We see Jesus Christ, God's Suffering Servant, on His way to the cross, and yet He stops to serve two blind beggars! What love, what mercy and what grace!

The young ruler went away still spiritually blinded. He and others thought he was the top dog, but God saw him as a loser.

The disciples followed the Lord, but they also were blinded by their own silly ambition that they couldn't see who really Jesus was. After Jesus' death and resurrection, they got to see the whole picture and they became the true servants Jesus wanted them to be.

The blind man Bartimaeus couldn't see before the healing touch from Jesus. When he came to Jesus by faith, the Savior touched him and received the sight only to see his Savior hung on the cross a few days later. He could have been a last one to compare with the rich young ruler, but he became the first in God's sight.

## ***F. APPLICATIONS***

1) Our true identity and character does not depend on what people think, but what God does.

2) The Kingdom of God is not a matter of what we are going to get out, but who God is.