

Matthew Chapter 19 v 13 - 26

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[0 : 00] And after the interview, you think, what a hush you've made of it, that actually you are well out of your depth at the time.

Perhaps the interview revealed that your health, your wealth or ability is nowhere near as good as you had thought, and your expectations and your hopes are disappointed, dashed.

And so you leave the interview sad inside. In the passage that we've read, a man described elsewhere as a rich young ruler asked Jesus a question.

Seemed very reasonable on the face of things. It might be that you've got the same question there in the back of your mind.

Maybe it troubles you sometimes when you go to bed and you think about life, its meaning, its end as far as you're concerned.

[1 : 08] And the question is found there in Matthew chapter 19, verse 16. Good teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?

The man was very earnest, very respectful in putting this question to Jesus. And in Mark chapter 10, verse 17, the same interview is described and we're given further detail.

That the man ran up to Jesus and fell on his knees before him. Good teacher, he asked, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

Such an important question.

Important question you can possibly ask. So perhaps that question is going through your mind and you want the answer to that question.

[2 : 34] You realise that there's a judgement to come. There has to be a judgement to come. The whole world is calling out after justice.

When you watch the TV news, you think, oh, if only justice could be done in this and that situation. Justice is something that will come about in the future.

And you're concerned as to how justice will affect you. Perhaps you have a picture of the judgement to come. And your picture of the judgement to come is like a man with scales.

On the one side there's good, on the other side there's bad. Now, how are the scales going to adjust for you?

What are they going to show for you? What can you do to obtain a good judgement, a favourable judgement?

[3 : 33] What can you do to obtain a good judgement? You see, it's a very important question. Some time ago, I saw a baking programme. It might have been the Great British Bake Off.

It was some time ago and I can't remember the details. But one thing I can remember is that this man had made a cake. And the cake had got a dreadful fault in it.

So what did the man do? He smothered the cake in icing and you couldn't see the fault. Now, does that sort of thing go through your mind? You know there's a fault in your life.

Perhaps you're actually quite aware of it. And you think, what can I do to hide that fault? Is there some good thing that I can do to hide that fault and make me feel better about myself?

Make other people feel better about me? And who knows, maybe make God feel better about me. So, do you want to hide the bad attitudes in your life?

[4 : 39] Those thoughts and words in your life which are not good. You're actually ashamed of by adding some good work that makes you feel better about yourself.

Well, at least this man came to the right person. He either saw the miracles of Jesus or heard about them and concluded that Jesus had come from God.

That he was a special prophet. And he realised that Jesus would have God's answer to that pressing problem, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?

And Jesus is the right person for you to come to too. He's the only person who can give you eternal life. Remember that after his crucifixion, he was raised and enjoys eternal life.

He was raised from the dead. He has eternal life. And so he is the right person to come to. He conquered death. And he's the only person to do that.

[5 : 45] He's the only person who's got the qualifications to answer your pressing question, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?

And at least if you've got that question in the back of your mind and you want to know what Jesus has got to say to you, at least you're coming to the right person and at least you're asking the right sort of question.

You're not like those who despair of life after death and say, when you're gone, you're gone. That's all there is. That's all to life.

Let's make the most of it while we have it. Let's eat, drink and be merry now for tomorrow we die and that's the end of things. Well, at least if you're asking that question, you've gone beyond that very basic problem that so many people have.

It seems to be a good question, but I put it to you, it's a mistaken question. The man made a great mistake by bringing that question to Jesus.

[6 : 59] It was coming from the wrong attitude, the wrong assumptions in the back of his mind. Yes, he was earnest, sincere, but there was something seriously wrong and it was shown up in two ways.

First of all, in verse 22, he went away sad. And then there was another indicator that he asked the wrong question.

Did you notice that Jesus didn't answer his question directly? He didn't give the sort of reply that the man expected.

In verse 17, Jesus answered the man's question by putting another question. Why do you ask me about what is good?

Jesus replied, There's only one who is good. And the man hadn't considered what it means to be good.

[8 : 03] He was superficial and thoughtless in his understanding of goodness. He was ignorant of the immense, infinite goodness of God.

The man's life was taken up with his riches. They were his God. Sometimes when you talk to people, you find folk just like this.

They're very conscious of their wealth. It gives them a sense of importance and sets them apart from others. And sometimes you find it's the only thing that they can speak about.

It's the only thing that they think about. They live for it. Their identity is all to do with what they have and own. Perhaps a man thought, I can turn my wealth to my advantage and use it to do something good that will make me stand out from the crowd on the day of judgment and guarantee a place in heaven.

But not everyone takes pride in their wealth because they don't have it. Some have great natural talents, intelligence, speech, great ability in administration or practical gifts or musical gifts.

[9 : 42] So what good thing, deed, action, occupation, do you think that you might do in order to guarantee eternal life?

The very telling words in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 13, Paul writes these things, If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels but have not love, I'm only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.

If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge and have a faith that can move mountains, that would be a very good thing, wouldn't it?

If I have a faith that can move mountains but don't have love and nothing. And if I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I might boast but do not have love, I gain nothing.

So are you rich in anything and proudly suppose that you can do anything with these things to merit eternal life?

[11 : 04] If you give life itself, you're mistaken. If I give over my body to hardship that I may boast, Paul said, and have not love, I gain nothing.

And if you want to do anything to impress God, you're barking up the wrong tree. After all, he's given you everything you have.

Wealth, gifts, talents, intelligence, and so on. At the very best, you're only giving back to God what he has freely given to you.

Now your life in this world is like a guest in the house of a very wealthy person but infinitely richer than what you are.

Your health, wealth, life, breath, family, friends, talents are given to you freely by God who does not change.

[12:07] We change, he doesn't change. God is unchangeably good. He is the giver of every good thing. James wrote, every good and perfect gift is from above coming down from the father of the heavenly lights who doesn't change like shifting shadows.

At this time of the year, children go out with their torches and so on and they've got their fires and you know how people walk around and you see shadows going all over the place.

Well, God is not like that. It's not like shifting shadows. He doesn't change. It's as though it was always noon with him.

Jesus said, God causes his son to rise on the evil and the good, sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Now, that's goodness. The sort of goodness that loves even his enemies. He's infinitely patient with our world of men and women with its wars, brutality and greed.

[13:25] He endures centuries of wickedness, of idolatry and thankfulness and disobedience. Guess what? We're still here. how patient God is.

You're still here despite your unthankfulness, your disobedience, your mistreatment of others either in word or deed. He's good to you.

He continues to be good to you even though you're not always good to others. He was patient with you through your years of unbelief in the Lord Jesus Christ.

patient with you even though you might come week in week out to hear God's word and you don't respond because you're dead in sin and God is so patient with you despite what you are and there we see something of the goodness of God.

It amazed the apostle Paul who testified of the mercy of God when he spoke to his young friend Timothy. Paul writes this to Timothy I was shown mercy so that in me the worst of sinners Christ Jesus displayed his unlimited patience.

[14:49] So have you considered God's unlimited patience with you? We're all so slow to learn to learn from him and yet he allows us to go on living in his world and enjoying his blessings in that world which we really delight in.

What patience, what infinite patience God has to us. And then he's good in his judgments. The justice of men is often perverted.

It's not true of God. He doesn't treat us with favoritism. On the day of judgment there'll not be one rule for the rich, the powerful and the wise people of this world and another for those who struggle with difficulties, poverty, disability.

He is impartial. Now we might be very guilty of favoritism in some way when we treat others of different races, cultures, class or ability.

We don't treat everyone the same way. We don't speak of everyone in the same sort of way with our judgments. But he's impartial. He sees us for what we are.

[16:11] We often condemn others out of suspicion or part knowledge. God's judgment is according to truth. He's good in his justice.

He knows our works, our words, our thoughts, our intentions and inclinations. Nothing is hidden from him. And he will judge the world with perfect justice by Jesus Christ, that one who knew about poverty and injustice, weakness and tiredness but without sin.

In fact, as you know, Jesus went about doing good. we need to recognize that God alone is good. Only God is without sin. Only God is true. Paul wrote to Titus, it's impossible for God to lie.

He alone makes promises that he always keeps. God alone is unchanging, faithful and good. God and this couldn't be said of you or I or any other human being.

[17:27] Or is there? Is there one who shares the goodness of the Father in heaven? Words always gracious and true.

earlier in Matthew's gospel, chapter 3, verse 17, at the baptism of Jesus, a voice from heaven said, this is my son whom I love.

With him I am well pleased. We get the same words in Matthew chapter 17 and verse 5. A voice from the cloud said, this is my son whom I love.

With him I am well pleased. Listen to him. He alone has the goodness of God because he is God. He alone is perfect.

In him alone was no fault found even by his enemies. So what about you and me?

[18:34] What about this young man, this wealthy young ruler who had been given so much of this world's goods? Was he good? Far from it.

Jesus said to him in Matthew chapter 19 verse 21, if you want to be perfect, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven.

The reason why the man went away sad was because he was not and could not be perfect any more than you or I.

He didn't have the goodness or the righteousness of God. But Jesus was perfect in goodness. He did give away absolutely everything out of love.

Paul writing to the Christians at Corinth encouraged them to be generous and in his second letter, chapter 8 verse 9, he said, you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

[19:52] Jesus did what that man could not and would not do. The man was sad because he didn't want to give up his riches, but Jesus came to do God's will that you and I might become rich.

He alone displayed the goodness of God. He alone could do it because he was God. The early Christians sung hymns just like we do, and it's believed by many that Paul quoted from such a hymn when he wrote to the Christians at Philippi, chapter 2, verse 5, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus, who being in very nature God did not consider equality with God something to be grasped at, something to be used for his own advantage, rather he made himself nothing by taking the nature of a servant, being made in human likeness, and being found in appearances of man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.

what a contrast between him and that proud, self-centered young man who thought he had within himself the power to impress God, and all he had to do was some outstanding good deed, and he'd be okay.

I wonder if you see yourself, something of yourself, in that man who came to Jesus. Jesus interrogated the man to show him that his problem was not a matter of doing some good deeds, some service to God or to others, his problem was a deep moral problem.

Let me read to you an account of the interview. Chapter 19, verse 17. If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments. He needed to know that to obey is better than sacrifice.

[22:00] God's commandments point us in the direction of what it means to be good. Goodness is a moral quality. In common speech, we mistake the nature of goodness.

The goodness that God is interested in is not like the sort of comment you get on children's report in school. A child might be described as being good because he's good at maths or art or music or sport.

Now that's not the nature of the goodness that Jesus is talking about. It's moral goodness. Again, some people talk about a man being a good chap because he's the life and soul of every party. It is a good laugh in other words. Now that isn't the case of the goodness of God. God the rich young man might have been a good businessman. He might have had a very good home but these things did not make him good.

Be clever, talented, rich, popular and yet be a moral failure. The commandments of God point to us that it is moral goodness that we need.

[23:18] God is holy, just, righteous, faithful, truthful, generous, patient and this is the sort of thing that he delights in. This poor man was clueless.

He asked which commandments should he keep? And that question reveals so much about him.

He needed to be aware that Jesus was talking about the commandments given by God to Moses.

God's commandments demanded total, universal obedience. And Jesus referred to those in verses 18 to 19. The man wasn't free to pick and choose from that list.

Nothing less than total obedience in his spirit and letter of the law was needed to produce the goodness that God demanded. In his letter, in which he wrote warnings to proud, covetous, professing Christians, James wrote this in chapter 2 verse 8.

If you really keep the moral law found in scripture, love your neighbors yourself, you're doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin. You show favoritism to one child as opposed to another child, you're showing favoritism and you sin.

[24 : 37] For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. For he who said you shall not commit adultery also said you shall not murder.

If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you become a lawbreaker. If you're just one percent below the pass mark of an exam, you fail.

Many antiques have little or no value because of some minor damage. If you keep sheep and you fence all your land but leave one gap open and the sheep get away, you've failed in producing good fencing.

Those sheep will transgress the boundary that you intended. Sin is the transgression or crossing of any of God's commandments.

Now listen to how the conversation went on in verse 18. Jesus answered him, you shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness, honour your father and mother and your neighbours yourself, the man thought he'd done it.

[25 : 51] All these things I've kept. The young man said, what do I still lack? Was he perfect?

Notice that Jesus held back on one commandment.

He didn't say anything at all about the sin of covetousness. But then Jesus said, if you want to be perfect, go sell all your possessions and give to the poor and you'll have treasure in heaven.

Money and wealth were the things that the man lived for. They were the things that gave the man meaning to his life. They gave him his identity and his sense of security. The proverb said, the rich man's wealth is his thum city.

The man was convicted of his sin. He went away sad. It wasn't that he needed to do some good thing to earn heaven. He needed salvation to save him from his sin.

That's why the young man went away sad. He realized that he was lost. Heaven was beyond his reach. He couldn't stand before God who alone was good and just and perfect.

[27 : 07] Jesus went on, truly I tell you it's hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again, I tell you, it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.

And the disciples were astonished. If a rich man that everyone looks up to has such a difficulty in entering the kingdom of God, who then can be saved?

What hope has an ordinary mortal God? What hope have those got who aren't richly endowed with all sorts of things that men prize?

Jesus said, with man, this is impossible. But with God, all things are possible, even the salvation of that young man.

But where is the power to be saved? It isn't in the law of God. The rich man thought he could possibly test the test of the law because God's kept it in a superficial way.

[28 : 12] But when he was convicted of his self-centered covetousness, he went away sad. The law of God is not the power to save.

What it does, it tells us that we need to be saved. You need the power of God. I need the power of God. Everyone needs the power of God.

Rich men, powerful men, influential men, wise men, all need the power of God to be saved. They need that power which is not possible with men.

Without God's power, we're all helpless. So where do we look for God's power? Listen to what Paul said in Romans chapter 8 verse 3. Paul who himself was convicted of covetousness.

He said this, for what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, or sinful nature, God did by sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering.

[29 : 20] Jesus, the son of God, became the son of man. He took on our flesh and blood and offered himself a sin offering up to God.

There a calvary. He who was one with us, stood for us, and paid the penalty of our sin. That's the power of God. That's why it is that the apostle Paul went everywhere preaching Christ, preaching Christ and him crucified.

Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God. So have you believed in the Lord Jesus Christ? Have you come to the cross? Have you believed that Jesus died for you to take away your sin, that you might stand perfect in heaven?

Are you looking to the one whom God is perfectly pleased in to be your saviour? Or put it another way, have you humbled yourself like those small creatures that we considered earlier and squeezed through the narrow way that few find?

Have you found eternal life in the Lord Jesus Christ? Let's pray. Lord, we ask that you would convict each one of us that you alone are holy and good and that the only way into your presence is through that saviour that you gave.

[30 : 49] We thank you for him. We thank you that so many of us here have that hope, that confidence, that in Christ alone they stand. we offer our thanks, we offer our prayers in his name.

Amen. For our final hymn, let's sing number 593. Rock of ages cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee.

Let the water and the blood from thy river's side which flowed be of sin the double cure, cleanse me from its guilt and power. Let's rise to sing number 593.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. ding joining me.

■ marathon Buch terra road ■ dam ro■ coast■ live Thank you.

[32 : 59] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge, my fortress, my God in whom I trust.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with each one of us now and forevermore.

[34 : 53] Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.

Thank you.