

14 October 2018

What Must I Do To Inherit Eternal Life

Text: Mark 10:17-22, (see also Matthew 19:16-22 and Luke 18:18-24)

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior +Jesus Christ. Amen.

In our Gospel reading this morning we find the rich ruler asking our Lord the most important question a person can ask in their lifetime: “...**what must I do to inherit eternal life?**” To put it differently, what the ruler is asking is, “What must I do to be saved?”

This inquiry into obtaining eternal life was one that had bugged this rich young ruler for quite some time. It kept him up at night as he thought about what he had heard and seen and about how he had lived his life. Here he was, working in the church, listening to the rabbi’s teach that “obedience to God’s commands and good works” is what was required to get to heaven and yet he wanted one more opinion. He had heard about Jesus going around performing miracles, and he may have even had the chance to pop in on the carpenter from Nazareth from time to time, listening to the what he was saying. So when Jesus came near, he thought, “This is it. It’s now or never. I may not get another opportunity to asks him”. So the text tells us that this rich young ruler runs up and kneels before Jesus and asks this most important question: “**what must I do to inherit eternal life?**”

Jesus told the man, “You know the commandments. Do not commit adultery (sixth commandment), Do not murder (fifth commandment), Do not steal (seventh commandment), Do not bear false witness (eighth commandment), Honor your father and your mother (forth commandment)”. Jesus knew the Law of Moses. He also knew this man, perhaps dressed in his temple attire, worked at a place where he could easily have asked the same question of someone else. But more than that, Jesus knew this rich young ruler’s heart. He knew that the man was asking out of sincerity, wanting for certain to know that he was doing enough to get to heaven.

Do we ever stop to think about that question ourselves? I remember growing up in the Baptist church and hearing preachers, especially during revivals, asks from the front, “If you were to die tonight, do you know where you’d spend eternity?” That question scared the David out of me. I knew two things at that moment: That if I died that night, I wanted to be with Jesus and that I wanted to make sure I was getting there. I needed

to know. I needed to be sure. So I did as this rich young ruler did, I ran and knelt at the feet of Jesus begging for mercy and for Him to save me. And He did.

That's the thing about God's promise of eternity for us, it's certain and He is the only way in which we can get to heaven. Jesus says, **"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6 ESV)**. The same promise is true for you today too. You can take great joy in knowing that you are indeed saved and that your eternity is in heaven with Him if you believe, not because of any work of your own, but because of His death on the cross for you that takes away all your sins, for all time.

Let me be clear about this: there is absolutely nothing you can do to win your salvation to heaven. You cannot be charitable enough. You cannot be a good enough person. You cannot buy your way into heaven. Trying to get to heaven by your power alone is not only wrong, the very idea of it makes a mockery of God and our Lord will not be mocked.

The rich young ruler in our text was convinced that he would be in heaven if He died because he kept the commandments perfectly (so he said). He believed the message he had been taught in the church, that his works earned him salvation. He was a good person. He did good works. He was charitable and gave generously. But then Jesus called Him on it. Jesus caught Him in a lie, for in fact, the man did not keep the commandments as God had told him too. Worse yet, he was standing before God and lying to Jesus about being without sin to Jesus' face.

We are no less guilty than He is though. We break God's commandments every day, some more than others. Look at the commandments that Jesus mentions here. Adultery. We are guilty of breaking that one. Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison, President of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod once said that if our sin of breaking the sixth commandment was made known publically, we'd all run from this place and would never show our faces again. Murder. Well, we've never physically done that maybe but our words toward others have been just as bad, murdering the spirits and breaking the hearts of our friends, family, neighbors, and even our enemies. And let's not get started on the eighth commandment, bearing false witnessing. Regardless of how hard we try, we gossip. We're all guilty of it. And we never disobey our parents or those in authority do we?

Yes we've all sinned. And it is because of sin, because we are unable to keep the commandments perfectly, that Jesus came to die on the cross in our place to take away our sin. When Jesus told the rich young man to give up everything and to follow Him, the young man couldn't do it because it would cost him everything he had. We are

unable to follow Jesus sometimes too because we are unwilling to give up that sin of self.

Knowing this, knowing our hearts like He knew the heart of the rich young man, Jesus responds to us as He did him. Jesus came to this world to be the rich young man. He did as we cannot, walking away from everything for you and me for He is the very Son of God who came down from heaven for us men and for our salvation. The Apostle Paul describes it like this in 2 Corinthians, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you by His poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9). Jesus left the riches of heaven to become God in flesh for us and in doing so, He walked the way of the cross to bear our sins, to bleed and die for our sins, and to die for our sins that we don't have to die but rather live.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, rest assured that your salvation is certain if you repent and believe. Know that if you were to die today you'd spend forever in the arms of our Savior. Heaven is for you, not hell. You don't have to be anxious or worry if you are good enough, if you have done enough, if you have given enough. Christ answers that for you on the cross, "With my death, you have eternal life". Now and forever. Amen.

Now may the peace of God which surpasses all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.