

SERMON

“A QUESTION WE ALL ASK”

Preaching text: Mark 10:17-31

A young man came to Jesus and asked, “Good teacher, what must I do to get into Heaven?”

Isn't that what we all want to know? What do we have to do to get into Heaven? Some of you would prefer to be doing something else right now ... but instead you are here at worship. Maybe you are here because you think it'll help get into heaven. Be honest now. I realize that not everyone is here just because you can't wait to hear this message. Some of you are here to make sure your bases are covered.

The problem is, “What must I do to get to Heaven?” is a flawed question. The flaw is this: There is nothing we can do that will guarantee our entrance to Heaven. Our getting into Heaven is not determined by what we do, but by what Jesus has done for us.

So, a young man comes to Jesus asking how he can get into Heaven. He says, “Good teacher, what must I do to get to Heaven? First, Jesus says only God is good. Then he goes on to say, “you know the commandments: honor your mother and father, don't kill, don't commit adultery, don't steal, don't lie, and don't cheat.

“Teacher,” the man replied, “I've never once broken a single one of those laws.”

I think his answer says a lot about him. He hadn't broken a single law? He had never lied? Never cheated? Never stole anything as a kid? Yeah, right. He wasn't righteous. He was delusional.

He's like too many people today. They are affluent. They are bright, successful. They have all the toys this life can afford. For some, life has come easy for them. They've never suffered, never really agonized, never really questioned life's many injustices. They live shallow lives ... lives untested. “What must I do?” they ask. “I've laid up funds for my retirement. I've got stock options to guarantee

my current needs. Now how do I add Heaven to my portfolio? Just tell me and I'll take care of it."

Jesus looked at him, and loving him said, "You lack one thing ..." Finally! This is what the man was waiting for. He only needed one thing. Whatever the Master asked of him, he knew he could afford. Help lead a ministry at church? Bring food for the hungry? Help with outreach to the neighborhood? Those weren't ministries he was excited about, but he could do them if they guaranteed him a place in Heaven.

"You lack one thing," Jesus said. "Go and sell all you have and give the money to the poor ... and you will have treasure in Heaven." The man went away shocked, and was devastated, because he had lots of stuff.

Did you know that this is the only time Jesus told someone to give away all of their possessions? Money can get in the way of some people following Jesus, but it is hardly the only thing. Maybe attachment to wealth is symptomatic of a much deeper need.

This guy had the world by the tail ... but Jesus said he was lacking something. Instead of thinking about all he was being asked to give up, consider what he really needed. **The one thing he needed was to know God's presence in his life.**

The rich man wanted to "do," he didn't want to receive. Just a few verses before this Jesus blesses little children. Children know they are dependent; they cannot do everything for themselves. So, they are able to receive gracefully. We adults have more trouble accepting help. We like to keep things even. We like a quid pro quo relationship. You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours. But it's impossible to do that with God. God's gift of salvation is too big for us to ever earn.

This guy didn't need a system ... he needed a Savior. God doesn't give us heaven because of what we have done. Think about it. Only a puny god could be bought with tithes. Only a vengeful god would be impressed by our pain. Only a heartless god would sell salvation to the highest bidders. But only a great God

does for His children what they cannot do for themselves. God has taken care of what we cannot.

The disciples asked Jesus, "Then who can be saved?" Jesus looked at them intently, then said, "Without God, it is utterly impossible. But with God everything is possible." And that is the point of the story. With God everything is possible.

My hope and prayer are that we live our lives in gratitude for all God has done for us. Live for God not out of a fear of going to hell, but out of gratitude for being promised Heaven! Jesus already loves you and wants to be a part of your life. The invitation is open. How are you going to respond?

AMEN.