

# True Wealth

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Preacher: Derek Lamont

[ 0 : 00 ] We're going to be looking at the passage we read in Mark's Gospel chapter 10 and seeking to hear what God is saying to us as Mark records what Jesus was teaching to his disciples.

It's something we often say here, and you need to recognise, there's not an original thought in our heads ever, but it's a famous quote that Jesus, King Jesus is good, but he's not safe.

And that takes us back to the Narnia Chronicles and C.S. Lewis. But I think the trouble is that so often we tame him very much.

And so we find that different places in the Bible that it's very, very provocative and very challenging for us. That happens in the Old Testament with some of the amazing kind of living parables that God wanted his prophets, maybe particularly to live out, and sometimes in the New Testament with the stories or the parables.

And I did wonder, I did think about it, not seriously, but just to give you an idea, I did think of coming in today to preach with all my clothes inside out.

[ 1 : 15 ] But I knew I couldn't do that because that would be just drawing attention in a wrong way. But it would have been significant because really to be a disciple of Jesus, that's exactly what God is teaching through Christ's teaching to the disciples, and Mark is recording.

To be a disciple is to be a follower of Jesus is there's a brain and a heart reboot, a transformation that is counterintuitive to our natures, that turns our lives upside down.

And that is really important to grasp for us in our Christian lives. It's really significant because at the core of our being, Jesus wants to be Lord and wants to be our Savior.

Our wills, our egos, our very beings face a revolution that turns us a completely different way when we're following Jesus as we're repentance is, isn't it? It's one of the aspects of it's turning towards God and Jesus.

And that His light and His face in our hearts, it transforms us somehow, somewhere along the road.

[ 2 : 24 ] Christianity I think has been perceived as afternoon tea with the vicar. Christians are sidelined as sweet talking, nobodies, self-righteous, moralists, or clean living flatliners, bland, unnoticed and safe.

We don't get that from the gospel of Mark, and we don't get that from the teaching of Jesus. This is a great, this is an incredible God-breathed account that Mark is inspired by the Holy Spirit to give of Jesus, and we've been seeing that.

The first eight chapters, I mean, it's very well planned out. The first eight chapters really explain a little bit more about the character of who Jesus is. And then in this section that we're looking at, or a wider section of which this reading is part from the middle of chapter 8 to verse 10, Mark moves from talking about Jesus to talking about what it means to be a follower of Jesus, what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.

You've got this stylized, concentrated, thoughtful explanation, verse chapters 8 to 10, of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus, what it means to follow Jesus in 21st century Edinburgh, as well as in 1st century Galilee.

And this section starts with Peter. Peter saying, you are the Christ, you know, making that great claim, that great declaration of who Jesus is.

[ 4 : 01 ] And then Jesus in his teaching following that great claim blows their understanding of discipleship well out of the water.

And he intersperses these teachings about discipleship, as we've seen with three prophecies of his death and resurrection.

Because he's trying to get that through to them. This is what's going to happen. This is the direction I'm going in. My death and resurrection is central to who I am, and therefore so that is central to

what discipleship is about.

And he deals with greatness, and he deals with pride and humility and status and prayer and last week marriage and divorce, we saw. But it's not fine tuning. It's not just saying a little, we change here, we fine tune here, are we moving of the dial in my life and thinking.

It's an absolute earthquake of character, revolution and change. How can you describe it?

[ 5 : 02 ] How can you describe it in such a way that brings life and vitality? So I can't, wait a minute, the new birth. That's how Jesus uses, that's the description Jesus uses because that is so radical.

He says, it's like being born a new, born afresh. And it's easy, maybe especially if we've grown up in the church to lose sight of that, to lose sight of the radical transformation that is happening if we've been brought up in the church or not, if we've come to Christ, there's a new birth.

And it's easy to lose the drama of belonging to Christ, the growing pains, but also to lose the incredible joie de vivre, the joy of living in this new relationship with Jesus Christ and the transforming power of His love and the Holy Spirit in us.

So the following Jesus, he deals with two very real issues here, very challenging things and challenges I think probably are concepts, very strongly one way or another.

First of all, he challenges our concept of goodness and then he challenges our concept of wealth. In this passage, we remember he's talking about discipleship and applying Christ to all our lives.

[ 6 : 21 ] And we have here an account of a rich man that comes to Jesus. Now, it's interesting in the title, it's called a rich young man and in other places it's called a rich young ruler because the other gospels give us a little bit more detail.

He's only called a rich man here, but in the other gospels in Mark and Luke, we're given a bit more information. He's a ruler, he's a leader among the people and he is young.

So in many ways what you have here is a classic, just a classic good guy. He's a good guy. Okay? He's polite. He's respectful. He's moral.

He's religious. He's well spoken. He's probably a gifted leader. I would imagine if he's in that position already as a young man, well presented. He's got means in all possibilities.

He's come from a good home, believes in eternal life. He's willing to discuss with a religious leader. It's a lot of things going for him. He's a good guy. He's a guy who come in here and fit in quite well.

[ 7 : 21 ] He's nice, respectable. He's kind of per se what I rub shoulders with that you would want to know. But interestingly, even in that early description of him, there's a massive fundamental issue that he brings to Jesus, a massive misunderstanding that he brings to Jesus.

He says, he thinks that pleasing God and eternal life is within his own grasp. What must I do, good teacher?

What must I do? What is it that I can do in order to be guaranteed eternal life? In other words, his thinking was that he really, he had no problem actually.

He's not really asking what he needs to do. He's actually looking for affirmation that he's already good enough. He thinks he can be by his life, by his gifting, by his talent, by his wealth, by his religiosity.

He would be good enough for God. What he's really seeking to do is publicly to vindicate himself. Jesus, you know, just point me a little bit in the right direction.

[ 8 : 35 ] If there's anything that needs a little bit of fine tuning in my life, I'm sure good teacher, you will show me that. Vindicate what I'm already ready doing. Give me the stamp of approval.

You're a good teacher, right? You'll do that for me. I'm okay, I'm an I. I'm going in the right direction. He wants affirmation.

That's very interesting. It's a huge part of today's society. Everyone wants affirmation, that they're doing the right thing, that they're going in the right direction, but not really wanting affirmation if it involves change.

And that's what Jesus begins to unpack with this rich young man in this story. And his response is always slightly enigmatic, as it often is with Jesus.

Why do you call me good? Everyone is good except God, and then he goes on to list the commandments. The second table of the law, the way that we're to treat one another, not adultery, not steal, not bear false witness, don't defraud honor your father and mother.

[ 9 : 48 ] So a provocative question, and then some statements. And fundamentally what Jesus is saying to this rich young ruler who has it all together and is good enough for God, he says, you have no idea what you're talking about.

You have no idea who you're talking to. No one is good except God. In that statement, he's kind of turning around what...

He's declaring what the rich young man has said is right, but the rich young man didn't mean it in that way. He's revealing himself as God, you know?

No one is good but God. Why do you call me good? You don't really know who I am. Why are you calling me good? You don't understand what goodness is. This guy didn't realize he was in the presence of God the Son, or why God the Son had come to this world.

And he's reminding the rich young man and us, not only of who he is, but of absolute goodness, and that no one can claim absolute goodness or even inherent goodness before the living God.

[11:09] No one has a right to share with God in the goodness that he has because we fall short of it because none of us are good by birth and by life in a way that makes us right with God and enables us to claim eternal life.

That right was lost in Eden. And the temptation to steal God's divine beauty and glory is too great and was too great from the beginning, and rebellion is seeded in every single heart.

And from the beginning onwards, inherent goodness as image bearers was lost. We can't claim that. And Jesus then goes on to say that he lacked one thing in verse 21.

Jesus looking at him, loved him and said to him, you lack one thing. And then he told him what to do, sell all that you have. You will have treasure in heaven, come follow me.

He lacked one thing. And what was that one thing? What was the one thing? Was it that he was rich and he needed to get, was it poverty that he lacked?

[12:22] I don't think so. I think what he lacked, the one thing he lacked, which Jesus doesn't say what it is directly, he tells him what to do and he tells him to follow him, but he doesn't say exactly what he lacked.

I think what he lacked here was that goodness that he thought he had. He lacked the one thing that only Jesus could give him, perfect goodness before God, that Jesus had come to give by his death and resurrection and by himself living the good life and then dying in our place.

It's very interesting. He lacked that one thing. What? What hope is there then?

For anyone else, the disciples were absolutely gobsmacked by what Jesus said. And we'll go and speak about that in a moment. But what Jesus was exposing and what he was making clear was that really this rich man, he looked for his, his functional God was his wealth, of course.

And he looked for his security, for his identity, for his happiness, for his reputation, for his independence. He looked for it all in his wealth and in his standing.

[13:49] And if it came down to it, if his wealth gave him all these things and he was being asked to give up his wealth or follow Jesus, Jesus came a poor second.

There was no chance that he was going to give all of what wealth afforded him and the security and the goodness that he felt it gave him to following Jesus. It was actually quite a common thing for, for people to give up everything to follow a particular leader.

So it wasn't particularly unexpected maybe. But Jesus was exposing his heart. Jesus was exposing what he really trusted in and what he really loved.

And Jesus was simply not valuable, important or good enough to recognize and follow. So in reality, it's not just an abstract goodness that he lacked.

What he lacked was Jesus himself and following Jesus and recognizing that Jesus' goodness alone is what we take in order to enjoy life with God and know eternal life eternally.

[15:05] Is that the one thing that you lack following Jesus? Is it the one thing? Jesus, Jesus points out the one thing. Is it the one thing that maybe it's a lack in your life?

What may it be today that God is exposing as your functional God, your functional idol? What you trust in, what you rely on, what's important to you?

Is there one thing that you lack? And Jesus says, ultimately, it's following Him and entrusting your life to Him. With all the radical reality of that and all the sacrifice and all the challenge that it's going to bring into your day-to-day living and into mine, as we are challenged because this is speaking to disciples, those who call themselves followers of Jesus.

But it ties in then, secondly, with a great challenge to our own concept of wealth, our concept of goodness, which is blown completely out of the water.

But isn't it true that many, many people that you will meet this week, many people that if you get into open discussion with them, will put their hope for eternal life, even if it's fairly vague, on being good

enough for God.

[16:25] That God will accept me because I'm doing my best. And that that is what they put their trust in. However, that unravels and unfolds.

And yet the gospel reality says there's no one good but God. Nobody can enter eternal life and know Him and be a follower of Him unless they recognize that there's no inherent goodness, no work that we can do, no effort that we can put in that will make us right with God.

But it's a gift. It's a gift from Jesus Christ. That's what Jesus is trying to get over here as he speaks about Himself and following Him, following Him by the way of the cross and the resurrection which He speaks of so freely in these passages and the disciples didn't understand it.

So anyway, our concept of goodness and then our concept of wealth and speaking here in the second, so he really deals with a young man versus 17 to 22.

And then for verse 23 he goes on and speaks a little bit more about it to the utter astonishment of the disciples. And he talks about riches, how hard it is for those who have wealth or riches to enter the kingdom of God.

[17:39] And riches as it's spoken of here really means anything that enables us to be fully resourced in our lives, everything that you need for living a physical materialistic life, the possessions that we have.

Everything that enables us as it were to live the good life that become all-consuming, the kind of things that we functionally trust in as this young man did.

Wealth was his comfort that came first. So for his life there was a real materialistic focus. And that's a great challenge for us today I think as well to have this incredible materialistic focus, all this stuff that we can't take with us.

The moment that we die it will be completely irrelevant. It will have no currency whatsoever in eternal life, none.

Nada, zilch. So all about this life and living as if all of life just revolves around what we can do and achieve and be ourselves.

[18:49] Kind of that modern phrase that I kind of hate, I'm not right, you're seeing my prejudices and stuff coming out here, but that being the best version of yourself, we hear a lot of people saying all the time, I speak the best version of ourselves.

And again there's inherently nothing wrong with that. It's just speaking about trying to be the best people we can, working hard and living in that way, which is of course a great virtue at a human level, nothing wrong with that of course.

And that's the point with God, that being the best version of who we can be is not good enough for God because He's already gifted us the best version that we can be in Christ as we give our hearts towards Him.

It misses the centrality of following Jesus which He's speaking about because He parallels the riches of this young man with true wealth in verse 21.

He says, you know, you will have treasure in heaven if you come and follow me. And the Bible speaks about these spiritual treasures all along. He's talking about true goodness, that He's the one that can possess, that can enable us to have the gift and possess that gift, that nothing and nobody else can give us.

[20:13] Being right with God and knowing divine goodness in our hearts and our lives. Nothing material can give us that. So He's changing the focus of true wealth from materialism, from things to a relationship, a divine relationship with the living God.

True wealth is peace with God, forgiveness from God, love of Christ in our hearts, acceptance identity as a beloved child, grace to be transformed to love Him and love other people.

Working on that selfish, greedy, proud, lustful, uncaring heart, victory over evil and death itself and eternal life in a renewed and glorious material physical creation, remember.

This isn't soul speak. This is about His plans and purpose for us, a place of abundance and security. So you've got that great, great transaction. I'll mention a little bit more about that just as we finish.

For 2 Corinthians 8, 9, 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 through His poverty might become rich, speaking about His death and resurrection and the punishment that He received in our place.

[ 21 : 36 ] The concept therefore of wealth and the concept of goodness. So as we conclude, what is Jesus saying about following Him?

Today, what is Jesus saying about being disciples, about being Christians today? I'm sure He says a lot more than I'll be able to say. One or two things from this passage.

First is, I think it's important to look in a mirror. Verse 22, when Jesus had spoken to his young man, He was disheartened by the saying or literally says, his face fell.

And He went away sorrowful for He had great, great possessions. So there's always the encouragement to look in the mirror of Scripture. What's your demeanor before God today? What's your demeanor as a Christian? What's your demeanor if you're not a Christian at the prospect of following Him? Is it gloomy?

[ 22 : 36 ] And is your Christian life gloomy? Is your demeanor gloomy following Jesus Christ? Because like the challenge of giving up sovereignty and trusting in yourself and going against the flow leaves you gloomy and sad and everything being just a bit miserable and overly difficult.

If that's how we understand following Jesus as maybe long-term Christians, it's a lot of a drag. Or if you're not a committed Christian, you're here today, it's excellent to be here.

We're loving that. But if you think it's, the truth of Jesus makes you gloomy or makes you consider walking away sad, then can I say your sadness is deeply, deeply misplaced.

Because our gloom when we come into the presence of Jesus often confirms what our love and our heart is and in what we are putting our trust.

If we can't see His beauty and His goodness and His rightful claim on our lives, if we're simply content with being good or better than some other people, then we miss the point of what Jesus is teaching and what He wants us to understand.

[ 24 : 06 ] And I think it comes down to that amazing phrase where Jesus, in verse 23, no, before that, Jesus looked at Him and loved Him.

I think that's a remarkable statement that we have here. Verse 21, Jesus looked at Him and loved Him. That's what should change our understanding.

Here is Jesus, He's looking at Him. What a statement of love. And it's not that Jesus looks and loves us in some kind of bland and I don't care how you live or what you're going to do.

I still love you anyway. You can do anything you want. He looked at Him and I'm sure He loved Him with a degree of pathos and sadness because He knew it was in His heart. But He loved Him.

He wasn't going to affirm the status quo. He wasn't going to say to this guy, yeah, but I'll give you the stamp of approval. Just on you go, keep it going. He looked at Him and He loved Him.

[ 25 : 09 ] And that's how you must look at Jesus today, that He looks at you. He looks at all of us and He loves us. But it's often a love that is so honest because He's the great physician.

He's the great healer and He wants to deal with the things that take us away from Him and from one another. So look at the mirror. Also, I think we learned that the pursuit of riches is a snare to discipleship.

Wow, that's hard stuff, isn't it, today? But He says it's easier and there's no way of getting around it. He says it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

We can't misinterpret, we can't reinterpret that to make it easy. He's saying that it's a camel picture. It's an impossible picture that gives us and He's saying the pursuit of riches will be a snare to discipleship.

It can make poor people covetous and longing for riches as if to make their life just fantastic. And it can make the rich independent. I don't need anything.

[ 26 : 11 ] I just need what wealth I can have. Well we are called to pursue Christ and to pursue Him first, to love Him with our heart and soul and strength and mind. He's to have our heart.

We're not to be pursuing or looking for material possessions and wealth in order to satisfy us and enable us to be disciples.

No one or nothing else can do that for us. Nothing material can do it. And then again, if the rich man didn't really know what he was saying when he said, you know, good teacher.

And the disciples didn't really understand what they were saying, which was also right in verse 26 where they say, who then can be saved? They asked the question.

They were asking it from the point of view of thinking, here's a good guy. He's rich. He's moral. He's upright. Everything's fine. And they were just, you know, it's really superlative language.

[ 27 : 12 ] They just couldn't understand what was happening. They were exceedingly astonished when Jesus said that. It really blew their minds.

You know, if he can't be saved, who can be saved? And you know, they were absolutely right. It was the right question from the wrong perspective.

You know, they thought there's a standard you can meet and the rich guy kind of meets it. But if he doesn't, what opens up for anyone? And that's exactly true.

Nobody. There's no hope for anyone who's relying on these material things or on anything else other than Jesus himself. It's impossible.

A camel can't go through the eye of a needle. It doesn't happen. And yet Jesus goes on to remind us of the economy of the kingdom. He said, with man, that's impossible.

[ 28 : 07 ] Oh God, all things are possible. And unless we give up any self-righteous claim to friendship with God and eternal life, it will be impossible for us to be saved.

But we're asking for God to bring us from death to life, from blindness to sight to rely on, and I'm going to say it again with capital letters, the great big G transaction, big T, the great transaction that we read about in Corinthians.

But we receive the goodness, the perfect goodness of Jesus Christ who lived the kind of life nobody can live. And he takes, as we give him, our rotten, sinful hearts that face the punishment of God on the cross and the wrath of God against sin and against rebellion and against injustice.

And we receive eternal life. And we can know His goodness in our hearts. It's impossible. I can do it. You can do it. We can do it in our own strength.

Why do you think we pray together? Why is Friday morning so important? Why do you pray when your Christian friends, friends that are not Christians? Why do you pray for them?

[ 29 : 24 ] Because it's impossible. It's impossible for us to change someone's heart, to change our own heart, to be good enough for God. It's impossible. But he says it's not impossible with God.

Jesus is trying to get that across to the disciples that the walk of faith is a radical, transformational, God-centered, empowered by Him alone walk of impossibility.

And he also says, we will be losers and we will enjoy true riches. We'll be losers because he gives a great list that when we follow Him and don't rely on anything but His grace and His goodness, he says, we receive a lot more.

You know, he truly says, you've left house or brothers or sisters or mothers or fathers or lands for the sake of the gospel, for my sake, for Jesus' sake and the gospel, you will receive a hundredfold now more, see more love, more belonging, more family, more unity, more of these things.

And material blessings will often come, at least we'll recognize them as from God. And he says, persecutions and persecutions.

[ 30 : 37 ] So we'll be losers at one level because we'll be losers in the eyes of many other people. We'll be persecuted if we give up the greasy pole of ambition and wealth, creation as something we rely on and as if we hold on to stuff when he asks us to hold on to Him.

We'll become the servant of all. We will be unworthy but we will certainly not be worthless. And obedience to Jesus will maybe sometimes leave us on the outside.

But we will enjoy true riches, family of God and dwelling of the Holy Spirit, belonging and blessing, victory and joy.

I'm no lover really, to be honest, and it's a matter of taste of the Beatles music. I'm sure it was revolutionary and all that, but I do agree with one of their famous lyrics, Money Can't Buy You Love. It maybe didn't come from a biblical understanding from their point of view, but we can't buy God's love by our best efforts, by our churchiness, by our inherent goodness that we think we have by even giving to the poor or serving others.

[ 31 : 49 ] We can't buy His love, we receive it into our hearts through the rebirth of coming to faith. So I just ask as we conclude, do you still think Christianity is about drinking tea in an afternoon with a vicar?

And you hold on to what can never give you goodness and eternal life when it's a gift that He promises to give everyone who seeks after and follows Him.

Amen. Father God, we pray that we would learn and know and understand more and more about what is being unfolded and revealed to us here, and that we would know what it means to follow Jesus.

Amen.