The Kingdom of God and Children (Treasure in Heaven)

Mark 10:13-31

Key Verse: 10:21 “Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

When we started Mark’s gospel study, I suggested our aim for Mark’s gospel that we may learn the heart of Jesus and have the eyes of Jesus. While studying chapter by chapter, we learned Jesus’ compassion on sinners. Jesus also taught us how to see people with the eyes of God. Last week the Pharisees questioned Jesus about divorce, but Jesus answered them with the true meaning of marriage and family. Jesus taught his disciples to see the beauty and joy of marriage behind their vicious question about divorce. Jesus wants us to have the eyes of Jesus to see the truth of God behind visible things of the world. In today’s passage Jesus teaches us who enters the kingdom of God and inherits eternal life.

First, simple faith and pure heart (13-16) Look at verse 13. “***People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them***.” As was the custom of the age, a father blessed his children by laying his hands on them. Isaac laid his hand on Jacob and blessed him. Jacob crossed his hands and blessed Manasseh and Ephraim, Joseph’s two sons. People wanted Jesus to bless their children. But Jesus’ disciples rebuked them because they thought that children were noisome and useless. They did not see the parents’ spiritual desire for God’s blessing on their children. How did Jesus respond to the disciples? Verse 14 says that when Jesus saw this, he was indignant. Jesus was upset for the disciple’s ignorance and spiritual blindness. Jesus continued in v14-15. “***Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.***” What does “the kingdom of God belongs to such as these” and “receive the kingdom of God like a little child” mean? Children are noisome and immature. But they are humble and pure. They have simple faith. They simply believe whatever their parents say. Children have pure heart. Jesus said in Matthew 5:8, “*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.*” Jesus teaches us to have simple faith and pure heart like children in order to see God. Those who have simple faith and pure heart enter the kingdom of God. Abraham’s faith was as simple as children. When God called him, Abraham obeyed and went even though he did not know where he was going. (He 11:8) His heart was as pure as the shining stars in the sky. So, he believed God’s promise when God promised with children as numerous stars in the sky. There is saying that children are teachers of adult. Verse 16 says that **Jesus took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.** May God give us simple faith and pure heart like little children. Amen!

Second, have treasure in heaven (17-22) While Jesus was on his way, a man ran up to Jesus and fell on his knees before him. (17) The man said to Jesus, “***Good teacher! What must I do to inherit eternal life?***” This man’s action and question was astonishing. He fell on his knees before Jesus as a subject does before his master. His question was different from the Pharisees or other vicious religious leaders. “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” “Wow!” How did Jesus answer him? Look at verse 18. “***Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone.***” Jesus did not mean that he was not good. No doubt that Jesus is good. He is the good teacher, good shepherd, and good savior. What he meant was that God is the only one who is absolutely good while all men are good and evil. Look at verse 19. “***You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother***.” All these are from the Ten Commandments. Jesus teaches us that we must keep our basic and moral duty as people of God. What was the man’s response? In verse 20 he says, “***Teacher,” he declared, “all these I have kept since I was a boy***.” Wow! We are surprised to hear that he had kept all these commandments since he was a child. His parents must have put him under strict discipline with moral education. **Jesus looked at him and loved him.** Even Jesus was surprised at his words and loved him. But to the eyes of Jesus, he lacked one thing. Jesus continued, “***One thing you lack.” he said, “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.***” (21) People thought that this man was perfect. To the eyes of people, he lacked nothing, but to the eyes of Jesus he needed more. He has to sell everything he had and give to the poor and follow Jesus. Shortly speaking, do not store up your treasure on this earth, but in heaven in order to inherit eternal life. Jesus asked him to put his hope in the kingdom of heaven. This man cannot hold two things both his wealth and eternal life at the same time. Jesus said in Matthew 6:21 that where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Jesus continued, “*You cannot serve both God and money.*” (Mt 6:24) Jesus knew that this man cannot hold eternal life and money. He had to choose one. Let’s see where this man put his treasure? Look at verse 22. “***At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.”*** Before he heard Jesus’ word, he was confident and proud. But after hearing Jesus’ word, his face fell. He lost confidence and had no more desire to talk with Jesus. He went away sad because he did not want to give up his wealth.

Third, for Jesus and the gospel (23-31) Through this man’s story Jesus teaches us several things. First of all, it is hard for the rich to enter the kingdom of God. Jesus said in verse 23-25. “***Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!” The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.***” Is it easy for a camel to go through the eye of a needle? Not at all! It is almost impossible. It is harder for the rich to enter the kingdom of God than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. Why? This is because the rich will not give up their money. The rich man in today’s passage shows us an example. He looked perfect morally and religiously, but would not give up his money. Money became his idol. He loved money more than eternal life. In fact, he did not desire the eternal life, but recognition from Jesus. If he really desired the eternal life, he must listen to Jesus’ words. This is because there is no more precious and important than eternal life. No one can buy eternal life with money. Jesus said in Mark 8:36-37, “*What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul*?” Jesus also said in Matthew 13:44. “*The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.”*

Then, is it easier for the poor to enter the kingdom of God as they pass through under the Gateway Arch. Not at all! It can be more difficult for the poor to enter the kingdom of God if they become slaves to money. So, here is a dilemma. Who can enter the kingdom of God? Are they middle-class people? Jesus teaches us one more thing. Second of all, we can enter the kingdom of God only by God’s grace through faith in Jesus. ***The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, “Who then can be saved?***” (26) The disciples must have complained about Jesus’ words. If according to Jesus’ standard, there is no one on this earth who can be saved. The disciples must have envied the rich man. They also wanted to become rich like that man. But after the man’s sad return, they also became sad and dispirited. Jesus knew their hearts. So, he said in verse 27. “***Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God***.” In these words, Jesus taught them that salvation comes from God, not by human works. It was impossible for the rich man to enter the kingdom of God by his works. Even though he had kept all the commandments since he was a boy, he failed to inherit eternal life because he couldn’t meet God’s standard. Salvation comes from God, not from human works or achievement. We can be saved only by God’s grace and by obeying Jesus’ word. Paul was a rich and well-educated man. But he knew that he could not save himself with all his human achievement and works. After meeting Jesus personally, he knew that salvation comes only by God’s grace and faith in Jesus Christ. (Eph 2:8-9) This is why it is possible for any human beings, regardless of their human condition and situation, to be saved by God’s grace.

Third of all, for Jesus and his gospel (28-31) Peter thought that he was better than the rich man who went away sad. Peter spoke up, “***We have left everything to follow you.***” (28) Indeed, Peter and all the disciples left everything to follow Jesus. What did Jesus respond to Peter? Look at verses 29-30. “***Truly I tell you,” Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much as in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life.***” In these verses Jesus promises with amazing blessing for those who make decision of faith. He teaches us who truly rich and blessed people are. They are those who are willing to sacrifice everything, even their family and wealth, for Jesus and the gospel. Jesus does not mean that they cut all their relationships with their family members or sell their business, but put their first priority to Jesus and the gospel work. Jesus taught them their priority in following Jesus and doing the work of God. Jesus continued, “***But many who are first will be last, and the last first***.” (31) Those who choose Jesus and the gospel first will be the first receiver for God’s kingdom no matter when they believe in Jesus. Even though they were born of Christian parents, they will be the last receiver if they don’t follow Jesus.

We don’t have to interpret Jesus’ word literally, still we must believe Jesus’ promise. This is because there are many examples who received a hundred times of blessing with salvation. Isaac received one hundred times of God’s blessing in the time of famine when he obeyed God and followed his words. (Ge 26:12) Look around and see our missionaries and co-workers who left their homes and followed Jesus’ world mission command. People look at outward appearance and judge others based on the amount of wealth and social positions. But God looks at our hearts and judges our choice. If your children fear God and live for Jesus and the gospel, you are more blessed than anyone. If you left everything to follow Jesus, your eternal life is guaranteed and your reward in heaven will be great. We cannot buy eternal life with money. We cannot enter the kingdom of God by PH D degree. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God as Paul said. (1 Co 15:50) When we have simple faith in Jesus and pure heart like children, when we simply trust in Jesus’ word and follow him, we come to know that our treasure is in heaven, not on this earth. Amen! Let us read verse 21.