**Mark 10:17-27 17As Jesus was setting out on a journey, one man ran up to him and knelt in front of him. He asked, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” 18Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except one—God. 19You 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.’” 20The man replied, “Teacher, I have kept all these since I was a child.” 21Jesus looked at him, loved him, and said to him, “One thing you lack. Go, sell whatever you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” 22When he heard this, he looked sad and went away grieving, because he had great wealth. 23Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it will be for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!” 24The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus told them again, “Children, how hard it is for those who trust in their riches to enter the kingdom of God! 25It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” 26They were even more astonished and said to one another, “Who then can be saved?” 27Jesus looked at them and said, “For people, it is impossible, but not for God, because all things are possible for God.”**

You Think You Are Good

How often don’t you come across someone who is misdirected in life? Take for example one of the most common questions that people ask: How are you? If I was to ask you that right now I am positive I would get answers such as “Every day is a new adventure” and “Fair to midland” and possibly “better than I deserve.” Those wouldn’t be the most popular answers. In fact, without a doubt the most common answer would be “good.” Just one word. We won’t get into why that answer isn’t correct grammar. But that answer illustrates the way all people think about themselves. We are all wrong when we answer “good.”

God is trying to have a conversation with us in his Word, and even whispers, “liar” in nature when we claim to be good. But so many people are too buried with their noses in the here and the now that they aren’t even looking where at what they are. Today, we have a rich, young, and successful man who thought he was good. He thought a good eternal life was a sure thing for him. He was genuinely concerned about eternal things. What a wonderful thing. What’s even better. We went to Jesus to find out.

He **ran up to him [Jesus] and knelt in front of him. He asked, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”** There he goes throwing that word around. Jesus caught it and called him out about it. You hear this done frequently. A child can be lazy and not complete his chores or homework. She can be sassy, disruptive, and rude. Too lazy to get a job. Wasteful of money. Thinks he is worth more than having to start at the bottom and work his way up. Yet parents will still say, “He’s a good boy.” “She is just going through a phase.” What do you mean by that!?! It depends on what your definition of “good” is. Our version of “good” and what it truly means to be good are two different things. The first lesson for the rich, young man is a reset on what goodness is in the sight of God. It revolves around the First Commandment, to understand and fear how holy our God is.

It’s hard for us to grasp our sinfulness just by the nature of being born in sin. It didn’t sink in to the rich, young man that he wasn’t good. Jesus had to show him by walking him thought the commandments. **Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except one—God. 19You 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.’”** These aren’t suggestions. Jesus doesn’t ask what he thinks of them. These are the commandments that God commands you to live by. It doesn’t matter what you want or how you feel about it. This is what God says. These aren’t optional. God doesn’t just say, “You do you. Whatever makes you happy.”

Another interesting thing, I didn’t catch at first, is how Jesus adds something int there two an extent when he says, **You shall not defraud.** It’s not an exact quote of any of the commandments. To defraud means to deprive someone of something, cause someone not to possess something. It makes you wonder if this rich, young man had built his riches by not taking care of some of the things that he should have. Did he skimp in certain areas to defraud others of what they needed or could have received? Did he already receive an inheritance that he refused to give to his brothers? Was he selfish with his riches? Was there some way he defrauded God by withhold his thank offering to God or by not using this blessing as God designed? I don’t know but Jesus doesn’t waste words at key teaching moment. Jesus said it this way for a reason.

That’s one reason why we use other portions of God’s Word to describe what it means to murder or commit adultery or steal. Adultery isn’t just committed with married people having affairs. It occurs on screens with pornographic images. Honoring parents isn’t just doing what your parents say while you live under their roof. It’s also speaking respectfully to them and caring for them when you have the ability. Murdering includes even having those “Argh” “I hope they get their do” or other hate-filled thoughts.

But the rich, young man breezed right by the defraud statement as well as the other commandments. **The man replied, “Teacher, I have kept all these since I was a child.”** He honestly thought he was good. He thought he had kept perfectly the commandments. He probably tried. But he was blind to who he actually was.

Even as Christians who are sharpened by the law as we study God’s Word, sometimes we are blind to ourselves or we just refuse to listen to what God tells us, sometimes through other people. We just refuse to listen when we are called lazy, rude, or impatient. We say of ourselves, “I’m not rude. I’m just telling you the way it is.” Or be excuse the why we act the way we do. “I would do my homework better if you taught it more clearly.” “I wouldn’t nag if you did you job right.”

Everyone is pleasing to himself. Everyone thinks she is good. In order to maintain his delusion, we deflect with excuses. We point out the flaws of others. If we notice the something wrong with someone else, we fill our eyes with it and so magnify it that on its account we see nothing but good in ourselves. We overlook our own vices and ignore the vices we share while we fail to see what is truly good.

Sometimes we need a dose of loving reality. That’s what Jesus did. **Jesus looked at him, loved him.** Jesus loved him enough to give the rich, young man a harsh reality of himself. **One thing you lack. Go, sell whatever you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.** This man was for sure lacking more than just one thing, but Jesus wants to hit him in the one place he knew would hurt the young man and cut him to the heart and that was his pocketbook. He didn’t tell him to give 10% which was what God demanded of the Old Testament believers and still places before his believers as a guide. He didn’t even demand 50% which maybe would have been doable. He demanded all the rich, young man had to be sold and given to the poor. 100%. Jesus showed he had been guilty of defrauding. He had been defrauding God and other people. His problem wasn’t his wealth. It was he lacked goodness with what he had.

Making use and taking advantage of systems for your own personal ease is defrauding God. Stating to be unable to serve and step within your abilities is defrauding God. As a Christian, not giving at least a percentage of your income is defrauding God. Your greed and looking out for yourself first and foremost is all too clearly to see if you just take a moment to consider what you think of yourself and what you do. You might think you are good but you are not. You might think you are able to do you, as you choose.

**When he heard this, he looked sad and went away grieving, because he had great wealth.** Would you do the same? Many do. Many just walk away. They will say such things as “the church only wants me for my money.” “The church only wants to take the fun out of life and control me.” “That’s not what’s good for me. I know what I have to do to take care of myself. What I need. They don’t know how hard my life is.” And excuses are made to lie about how we have kept the commandments and why we can’t be held accountable for where we disobey them. “We are good people after all.” Such are the comments of sad people walking away from Jesus. Sad people aren’t Christians because they walk away from Jesus and leave him behind because they believe they are good.

The rich, young man had to clearly see his relationship with God isn’t a matter of, “I’ll give you this is you give me that.” **What must I do to inherit eternal life?** “I have a lot to offer you God!” Jesus focused him on his possession because it is the easiest, that’s right the easiest, way to live a “good” life. I think just outside of every group of Christians are people who hold grudges against Christians. Most of the time, no one knows exactly what happened. When they find out we are members of a certain church, they are all too open with what they think. When they find out where we are from, they will point out their side of events and why they were right in what they have done. How the church missed out on having them as member because of what it did to them and look now at what they have become—how much they have or how successful they are or how well they are doing. But Jesus isn’t impressed. What they are is sad people walking away from God.

**“Children, how hard it is for those who trust in their riches to enter the kingdom of God!It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”** Why is that? Is it that Jesus hates rich people? Does Jesus hate people for being rich or for enjoy life? No. It’s what riches, earthly possessions which are the easiest way to follow God, can do to people. They become protective of “theirs” and revolve their lives around how much they have. They can make you proud and feel like you are something. They make you forget what a sinful world you live in when you live with less pain and struggle. Look at what prosperity has done to each next generation—decreased number of people even claiming to be Christians, way fewer people who are actually active in their faith, struggles within congregations because the easiest way to serve God has become a forgotten skill. It is because the sinful nature within us is an idol and the enemy of God. It defrauds from God. Christ doesn’t impress the person who lives by their sinful nature building them up about how good they are. They think they are already good. Such sad people. They truly are proud of that. Such sad people.

For people who are like that here is one person, Jesus Christ, who is not impressed. He doesn’t want anything to do with it. It is impossible for us to save ourselves with any amount of offerings and sacrifices. The disciples **were even more astonished and said to one another, “Who then can be saved?” 27Jesus looked at them and said, “For people, it is impossible, but not for God, because all things are possible for God.”** Sad people have already walked away or checked out by this point. What is left to be said is beyond them and out of reach for them. They wouldn’t understand it anyway.

But it’s at the heart and soul of everything Jesus did and said. The rich, young man needed to hear how impossible it was for anyone to get to heaven especially when they think they are good. Why? So that we would realize we need Jesus to be so much more than a good teacher. We need him to be our Savior and our God. We need him to save us by a plain miracle. Nothing else will do.

It takes 100% to be good, not just of possession given to God but of everything. Those who think this world is something to be pleased with miss out. Jesus gave up his everything. He, God, takes on flesh and becomes one of us. He had no home. He had no family. He had no riches. He died with nothing, naked on the cross, stripped of all dignity. Even his own Father in heaven turned from him, leaving him without a Father and a God. He died. He gave 100%, all so he could give us 100% of his righteousness. Unless you realize that you can’t do anything to get to heaven, you won’t see Jesus for who he came to be.

Did the rich, young man ever come back? We don’t know. Maybe it sunk in for him. He wasn’t good enough to get into the kingdom. It was impossible for him to enter by anything he did, no matter how small or great. Until he saw how sinful he truly was, he never would come to Jesus for what he needed, which was plain and pure salvation.

What about you? Will you ever come back?

Take the world, but give me Jesus?//In his cross my trust shall be//Till with clearer, brighter vision//Face to face my Lord I see.//Oh, the height and depth of mercy;//Oh, the length and breadth of love!//Oh, the fullness of redemption,//Pledge of endless life above!

Points to consider as an individual or with a small group:

What does it mean to be “good”?

What makes it hard to follow God’s commandments?

Describe the connection between possessions and following God.

Why can that be seen as the easiest way to serve God?

List three reasons it can also be the hardest.

Do you think the rich, young man was just sad because of his interaction with Jesus or do you think it had been a it had been growing for a long time? Explain.

Give your thoughts about being a sad person and walking away from God.