

Mark 10:13-22

Peace be with you, brothers and sisters, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time for us to read the Bible again. We'll continue to read Mark chapter 10, verses 13 to 22.

Jesus, accompanied by His disciples, facing Jerusalem, walked the road to the cross. This is a path of suffering, a narrow road that people are unwilling to walk, yet it is also a path to eternal life, a path to the kingdom of God. Yesterday, we read about the Pharisees testing Jesus with the question of divorce. Jesus no longer avoids the issue but engages directly with the Pharisees, bringing out the first condition for entering the kingdom of God: seeking the best will of God. The law quoted by the Pharisees is the will of God permitted by Moses. Jesus returned to God's original design for marriage, which is a foreshadowing of Christ and the Church. Therefore, in the Church, it is necessary to help the saints honor God in their marital relationships. And a sweet marital relationship naturally leads to children, as illustrated in the next event recorded in the book of Mark.

Verse 13: "Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them."

At that time, Jesus was already well-known because of His preaching, casting out demons, and healing the sick. Wherever He went, there were crowds surrounding Him, and among the crowd, there were people bringing children to Jesus, seeking His blessing by laying hands on them. The love of parents for their children is something already present in God's creation; this is a natural law of God. Not only humans but every created animal is the same. This is indeed a beautiful thing.

However, the disciples of Jesus, having received a very high revelation, knowing that Jesus is the Son of God, still did not understand Jesus' words when He spoke of His impending suffering, death, and resurrection on the third day. They also did not understand the way of the cross and always thought that they were following Jesus to accomplish something great, thus becoming proud. In their natural understanding, they were filled with ideas of greatness, rank, and distinction, easily dividing people into different categories. Among these categories, children were seen as immature and ignorant, so why bother the teacher with such trivial matters? Therefore, the disciples became impatient and rebuked those who brought children to Jesus. Dear brothers and sisters, how often do we find ourselves busy with church ministry, knowing that these things are spiritual and important, and we are zealous about them. During these times, we often overlook the children around us who are in need, even finding them bothersome. In reality,

Verse 14: "But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, 'Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God.'"

Notice here that it is recorded that Jesus was displeased, Jesus was angry. The Bible rarely mentions Jesus being angry, and this is one of the few instances. Clearly, the disciples made a serious mistake. Jesus stated that children should be allowed to come to Him and not be prevented, as those who belong to the kingdom of God are like them. Jesus took this opportunity to teach the disciples a lesson. Children are simple and pure; their joys and sorrows are genuine and unpretentious. What Jesus detested most was the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. Perhaps the children are still naive and ignorant, but they have strong vitality, and life in them is full of infinite possibilities. Jesus loves it when children are brought to Him; each one is precious to Him, each one carries God's purpose and plan within them.

Dear brothers and sisters, the church must value children's ministry, not because of how much biblical knowledge they can impart or how many verses they can memorize, but to provide them with a joyful and healthy environment for growth,

allowing each young life to develop appropriately. And in their growth process, help children discover their unique gifts and abilities. We often tend to train children according to our predefined patterns and forget that each child is unique, and God has specific purposes and plans for them. Therefore, all we need to do is bring children to Jesus; life will naturally develop and grow. Just as an apple tree naturally bears apples, you cannot make it bear pears. What we need is more observation and companionship. Help them discover the qualities that God has already placed within them and give them opportunities to grow. Jesus said, "for of such is the kingdom of God."

Verse 15: "Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it."

The translation in the Chinese Union Version is a bit awkward, but its original meaning is that if one cannot receive the kingdom of God like a child, they cannot enter the kingdom of God. Here we see the second condition for entering the kingdom of God, which is to turn back and accept the kingdom of God with childlike simplicity and joy. This way, one can enter the kingdom of God. This condition may seem easy, but it is actually quite difficult. Saints who are some age will admit that, in their experience of growth, the first thing they lost was their childlike innocence, their innocent heart. After the fall, human society often resembles a jungle, where survival of the fittest prevails. Therefore, in the process of growing up, people quickly learn to protect themselves, putting on a thick mask and becoming similar to the Pharisees. Let us pray for the Lord's grace to give us a healthy church life, where saints can sincerely interact with each other without playing politics or using schemes. This way, everyone can turn back and be sincere like children, and the church will have the reality of the kingdom of God.

Verse 16: "And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them."

Jesus truly loved children. He picked them up, laid His hands on them, and blessed them. If we are willing to turn back and become like children, we too can receive Jesus' embrace and blessing.

In the following verses 17 to 22, Mark records another incident. In parallel passages, Matthew's Gospel refers to him as a young man, while Luke's Gospel identifies him as a ruler. Therefore, this individual is a young ruler, who despite his youth, has achieved great success and comes from a wealthy family. Here we see Mark's logic, which is that the child mentioned in the previous passage has now grown up and, in accordance with societal expectations, has become a successful young ruler who comes to see Jesus.

Verse 17: "Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, 'Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?'"

This young ruler personally came to see Jesus, and he ran over, expressing his desires and urgency. As soon as he approached Jesus, he knelt down, displaying his humility and reverence. He should have been a beloved young man to all. He came to ask Jesus, addressing Him as "Good Teacher." This was his designation for Jesus. In his eyes, Jesus was a great teacher, and he wanted to learn more and better from Him. Perhaps his young life was filled with learning, and he had succeeded in his studies as expected, but he still felt it wasn't enough, feeling empty inside. Upon hearing about Jesus' reputation, he came to see Him, wanting to learn better lessons from this more enlightened teacher. He did not realize he got the title wrong because before calling Jesus a teacher, one must first acknowledge Him as the Savior.

Only after receiving grace and salvation, obtaining a new life, can one possibly follow Jesus to learn. Thus, initially, his address to Jesus was incorrect. Then his question, "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" was also incorrect. It's good that this young ruler hoped to inherit eternal life; he recognized the value of eternal life and desired to obtain it. However, he probably saw eternal life as his inheritance, like his property, but didn't realize it was an entirely different realm. His property was obtained through his efforts. He thought eternal life could also be obtained by doing something. Therefore, he came to ask Jesus what he should do to inherit eternal life?

Verse 18: "So Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God.'"

Jesus first addresses the young ruler's appellation to correct and guide him. Jesus asks him, "Why do you call me good?" The word "良善" translates to "good" in English, or a more direct translation would be "kindness" or "goodness." Jesus responded, stating that apart from God, there is no one who is good. The goodness people perceive is actually relative, and since it's relative, there isn't a fixed standard. However, divine goodness is absolute, measured by God's standards. Under God's standards, no one is inherently good. As Romans 3:10 states, "There is none righteous, no, not one." And Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," Using God's standard, apart from God, there is no goodness. By calling Jesus "good," the young ruler is subtly hinted by Jesus that he should recognize Him as God, for only God is inherently good. Following this, Jesus addresses the ruler's inquiry about "what good thing shall I do to have eternal life," by directly referencing Moses's law.

Verse 19: "You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Do not defraud,' 'Honor your father and your mother.'"

The commandments referred to here are the Ten Commandments given by God through Moses, and from the fifth to the tenth commandments, they deal with human relationships. "Do not murder" is the sixth commandment; "Do not commit adultery" is the seventh commandment; "Do not steal" is the eighth commandment; "Do not bear false witness" is the ninth commandment; "Do not defraud," which means not being greedy, is the tenth commandment; "Honor your father and your mother" is the fifth commandment. These six commandments pertain to moral laws. When Jesus came, He not only did not abolish the moral law but instead strengthened it. This is because Jesus came to fulfill the law, and while the Old Testament law dealt with outward actions, in the New Testament, the moral law addresses the intentions of the heart. For example, if you hate someone, it is considered equivalent to murdering them. Therefore, Jesus referred to moral law. Jesus did not mention ceremonial law because ceremonial laws are all foreshadows of Christ, pointing to Him. Now that Jesus Himself has come into reality, there is no need for foreshadowing. With Christ's arrival, ceremonial law can be abolished. Thus, in response to the man's question, "What shall I do?" Jesus used the six moral commandments regulating human behavior to answer him.

Verse 20: "And he answered and said to Him, 'Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth.'"

Upon hearing the response of the young ruler, our first impression might be that he is exaggerating! In fact, this highlights the difficulty of legalism. Originally, the law was the word of God, and God's word is living, capable of awakening our conscience and prompting us to examine ourselves more carefully. However, turning God's word into rules, into individual items, actually lowers the standard of God's word. Based on his upbringing and teachings, this young ruler believed he

had kept all the commandments. According to the Pharisees' judgment, his understanding was correct, but before Jesus, it was not sufficient.

Verse 21: "Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, 'One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.'"

Jesus looked at him and loved him. Such a young man who was willing to progress and had hope would be liked by everyone who saw him. Jesus also looked at him and loved him. Because of his love for him, Jesus was willing to help him a little more, hoping that he could see his true condition and humbly seek the salvation of Jesus Christ. Therefore, Jesus said to him, "You still lack one thing." This young ruler thought he was complete, but Jesus wanted him to recognize that he was not yet complete, so Jesus said, "You still lack one thing."

Although it was said that he lacked one thing, Jesus actually mentioned four things in succession. Because these four things are interrelated, they can be integrated into one. Jesus said to him, first, you must sell all your possessions. He likely had a lot of real estate, so he should sell all of them and turn them into silver. Second, you must give this money to the poor, share all your possessions with others, which is to love your neighbor as yourself. This is the part of the summary of the Ten Commandments about dealing with others. Third, accumulate treasures in heaven. This is telling the young ruler that his problem is not on earth but in heaven. On earth, he is very rich, but in heaven, he is very poor. Let him share his wealth with the poor, which is to accumulate treasures in heaven for himself. And the fourth, which is the last and most important, is that you must come and follow me. It means you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength, which is the part of the summary of the Ten Commandments about God. Jesus could see at a glance that wealth was his fundamental problem, and because of his love for him, Jesus came to address his fundamental problem.

Verse 22: "But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions."

He heard the words Jesus told him, his countenance changed because he knew he couldn't do it, for he had many possessions, so he went away sorrowful. In the previous instance, those children had nothing, they simply came to Jesus, and He laid His hands on them, blessing them. He also told the disciples to turn and become like children to enter the kingdom of God. But this young ruler, because he had many possessions, couldn't let go, so he departed sorrowfully.

I think the saints would all feel that Jesus was too harsh on this young ruler, asking him to sell everything, give to the poor, and then come follow the Lord. How many people can actually do that? If that's the case, how many can actually inherit eternal life? The key issue here is that he thought he could "do something" to earn eternal life. If you think you can "do something" to obtain eternal life, this is Jesus' answer to you. It's telling you that trying to earn eternal life through your own efforts is simply impossible. If we were to enter through "doing," I believe most of us would also depart sorrowfully.

But thank the Lord, we acknowledge that we cannot do it ourselves; we can only enter by grace. Once we enter, we realize the immense blessing we have received. It's through simple faith that we obtain eternal life. In our human lives, there are things we simply cannot do, cannot let go of. But this eternal life, in our daily lives, helps us, supplies us, allows us to know the power of God, and experience His faithfulness. And in this process, we can gradually let go. Things we used to hold tightly to, gradually, because of our understanding of the grace of Jesus Christ, we are willing to let go, and slowly we can start to release. If we were asked to let go of everything at once, we simply couldn't do it. But through our faith, we receive a life from God, and as this life grows within us, it helps us gradually let go. This is actually the process of sanctification for every saint, and it takes a lifetime. We're all on this journey, even though today we might not meet God's standards, but every day we get better, every day we progress further. Here we see the third condition for entering the kingdom: learning to let go.

Let's pray together: Lord, thank You! Thank You for reminding us, through Jesus leading His disciples to the cross, that to enter the kingdom of God, we must turn and become like children, learning to let go of all that occupies us. Lord, as we examine ourselves, we know we still fall short of Your standards, but we thank You for helping us walk on the path of sanctification. Through reading Your word every day, You help us learn to turn and let go, so that our lives become more heavenly and more free, continuing to lead us on the path ahead. We pray in the holy name of Jesus Christ.

