

## Which God do you worship?

Text: Mark 10:17-27 for 10/14/2018 by Pastor Bolwerk

*17 As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 18 "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone. 19 You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.'" 20 "Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy." 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." 22 At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth. 23 Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!" 24 The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! 25 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." 26 The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, "Who then can be saved?" 27 Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God."*

How many 'gods' do you worship? As Christians we would say that we only worship one God, the One true God. Yes, there are three persons that make up that one God, but it is still only one God. But do you really only worship one god?

The man who asks Jesus about how to inherit eternal life, he thought he was only worshipping one god. But as Jesus responds to this man's question he is also speaking to his disciples, and to us. As Jesus speaks he also wants us to answer a question. Our Lord does not want to know how many gods we worship. Jesus wants to know ...

Theme: Which God do you worship?

I. The god on the inside?

II. Or the god on the outside?

As we look at this portion of Mark's Gospel we want to keep in mind that Jesus is making his final trip to Jerusalem where he is going to suffer and die. As he is about to start out on this trip we are told that, **"a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. 'Good teacher,' he asked, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?'"** (v. 17). From Matthew's Gospel that we learn this is a *young* man. Notice what this young man is thinking: he believes there is something he has to do to gain eternal life.

Jesus' response to this man almost seems disconnected. Jesus says, **"Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone"** (v. 18). With that last statement Jesus is trying to get this young man to recognize that if only God is good, then the young man on his own is not good enough to inherit eternal life.

To help this young man understand this truth Jesus points him to God's Commandments. Upon hearing God's commandments this young man should have realized that he had not perfectly kept God's law. But he didn't. Instead he says he has kept all of God's law. He actually thinks he can work his way into heaven. The problem is that it is not possible.

So Jesus shows him his fatal flaw by showing this young man that he has his heart set on something other than God. Jesus said, **"Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth** (vs. 21-22). This young man worshiped a god who was on the inside, the god of his own good works. Jesus helps this young man see that his 'god' was not saving him because his 'god' of self-righteousness had not even kept the

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First Commandment. God says, **“You shall have no other gods before me”** (Exodus 20:3). This young man had failed at keeping God’s First Commandment because he believe he could do something that only God could do. So he ends up going away sad.

Now we know we can’t work our way into heaven. We know our works cannot save us. Yet we do still occasionally try to impress God with our good works. We look at God’s commands and far too often we keep them because we ‘have to.’ We keep them because this is what GOOD Christians do. I clean my room because the Fourth Commandment tells me to honor my father and mother, and I also do it because I know I’m going to get in trouble if I don’t. I may not like cleaning my room, but I know it’s what I need to do. And I go to church because God tells me to honor the Sabbath day. So I go and worship God, even if I don’t always like the music, or the songs that we sing, or the way we worship. I will even go to church if I am sick and can barely move because that’s what good Christians do. I will love my neighbor, even if the guy is a jerk and I can’t stand being around him. I will love him because that is what God tells me to do, so I will do it because I am a good Christian and that’s what good Christians do!

So, are you? Are you a good Christian? Since you are working to keep God’s law then God must see you as good because you are, right? But what is it that Jesus said? Jesus said, **“No one is good—except God alone”** (v. 18). When we think that by keeping God’s law we are somehow good because we do that, this is when we are worshipping the wrong god. If we think that ‘doing’ the law makes us good, yet only God is good, then we are really trying to make ourselves ‘gods.’ We are worshipping the god on the inside. We’re worshipping the god of self and breaking God’s First Commandment.

You cannot keep God’s commandments in any way that will ever *make* you good. In fact, the whole point of God’s law is to show us that we are not good. The Law shows us that we have all sinned. The only way we can ever be ‘good’ before God is for that goodness to come to us from outside of ourselves.

You are only good when God works faith in your heart through his word. It is a faith that trust in Jesus for the ‘goodness’ you need. The young man was right in calling Jesus ‘good’ because Jesus is God. He is God who gave up the glories of heaven to come and live in this evil world. During his life on earth Christ kept all of God’s Commandments, including the hardest one for us to keep – the First Commandment. And having fulfilled the requirements of all God’s law Jesus went to the cross and exchanged his goodness for our wickedness. Jesus made you good by paying for your sins with his life, washing you clean in his own blood, and then giving you his goodness; his righteousness. Jesus made you good by moving your heart to trust him. Any goodness we have comes from outside of ourselves. It has been given to us as a gift from a truly good and merciful God.

Part of the reason this young man was worshipping this ‘god on the inside’ was because there was another god he worshipped. It was a god outside of himself. It was a god that gave him comfort. This god brought him pleasure, and made this young man feel powerful and secure. We often wrestle with that same god. Do you worship the god on the outside?

This young man walked away from Jesus feeling sad because he trusted so much in his money that he just couldn’t let it go. He worshipped a god outside of himself, and that ‘god’ came between him and the true God. Jesus wanted his disciples to understand the problem that this false worship causes. **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.**

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**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 a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, “Who then can be saved?” (vs. 23-26).**

The disciples are shocked! Not because they feel sorry for the rich people of the world. They are amazed because they realize they too sometimes have this desire for worldly riches. They finally start grasping the point Jesus making: A heart that is set on worldly possessions can do nothing to save itself.

So what is your heart set on? Let’s face it, we all have things we think we cannot live without: a favorite toy, our smart phone, money even if it’s just a small amount, a spouse, a car, a house, being popular or liked, even a building like our church. When we say of something, “I cannot live without that” we are really saying to God “This comes first because I don’t trust you to give me what I need.” We hold something up as all important, and that becomes our god. A god on the outside. It’s a god that makes it impossible for us to enter the true God’s Kingdom.

Jesus disciples realize how desperate their situation is. They say, **“Who then can be saved?”** (v. 26). We cannot save ourselves, and these so called ‘gods’ we trust in can’t save us either. But Jesus address our fear with the truth we need to hear, **“With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God”** (v.27).

Our situation before God’s law is always an impossible one. We cannot save ourselves because every time we put something before God in our hearts we break God’s First Commandment. Jesus wants us to examine our hearts to see those things that might make us go away from him sad.

Having opened our minds to the problem of our sin our Lord calls us to trust in him, because he can save us! Jesus is the good teacher; the God with whom all things are possible! Jesus is the true God and Savior who not only saves us from the god on the inside, but he also saves us from the gods on the outside. Jesus saved you from all of the times you have failed at keeping the First Commandment, because he never failed at keeping that commandment for you. Your Lord lived for you. Then he died for you and rose from the dead for you, so you can be certain of your forgiveness; so you can be sure that his salvation is yours.

All we can do is stand in awe of Jesus’ grace and goodness. Our God graciously and freely gave us forgiveness of our sins and eternal life. And what is even more amazing is that he even gives us those things which he knows we’re tempted to treasure more than we treasure him. Our Lord generously blesses us with wealth and possessions, with so much more than we need.

We now have an incredible opportunity to use the things our God has given us to say ‘thank you’ back to him. We can use our God given wealth and possession to bring God glory. Jesus said to that young man, **“Sell [what] you have and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven”** (v. 21). We can use what we have to help others who are in need. We can give of our money and possessions to help those who are not as well off as we are; to help those who struggle with their day-to-day needs such as the people who were affected by hurricane Michel last week. We can also use our possessions to help support this church. Through the work of our church we can help people who are poor in spirit. We can provide God’s saving gospel that people so desperately need to hear. Let’s not turn the wealth God has given us into ‘gods.’ Instead, let’s use what God has so generously provided us to thank and

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praise to him for saving us.

So which God do you worship? Don't worship those other false gods: the god of self, the god of works, the god of worldly stuff. Instead, keep trusting in your Lord Jesus. Worship Christ because he is the one, true God with whom nothing is impossible. Jesus has done what was impossible for us to do, he has worked out our salvation, forgiven us of all our sins, and has given us a life that will never end. Amen.