

## Matthew 19:13-22 – “How To Have Eternal Life”

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We're going to look at two accounts today of people coming to Jesus. And we see through these accounts how easy it is to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, and yet how hard it can be. Do the conditions or rules change based on who's coming? Nope, it's all about the condition of the heart.

Summary Statement: The way into the kingdom of heaven is open to all, but entrance in is a matter of the heart. Those with open hearts to receive Jesus are invited in, while those with obstructed hearts are hindered from receiving Him.

### 1. Those with Open Hearts – 19:13-15

**19:13 - *Then little children were brought to Him that He might put His hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them.***

In the beginning of Matthew 18 Jesus used children as an example of how one was going to enter the kingdom of heaven. The disciples had asked who the greatest in the kingdom would be. Jesus then brought a little child to Him and said, *'...Unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven'* (Matthew 18:3).

The lesson there was about humility and having simple trust like a child. That's the one who will be great in the kingdom.

Then Jesus said, *'whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me'* (Matthew 18:5).

So, here's the disciples' opportunity to receive a child in Jesus' name and really show that they are learning and paying attention to what Jesus has been saying. And as you can imagine, there's still some lessons to be learned. Because as people bring little children to Jesus, the disciples are rebuking them.

- Now remember, it was common in the culture of this day for children to be seen and not heard. But Jesus was flipping the script on how people were to be treated. Jesus is giving the disciples an important lesson here, and that is that no one is to be restricted from coming to Jesus.
- There is no age, social status, nationality, or gender that is prohibited from receiving the blessing of Jesus.

And that's what these parents were bringing their children to Jesus for. They wanted Him to lay His hands on them and pray, which wasn't for healing (though that could be part of it), but more so it was to receive a blessing from Him. This was a common Hebrew practice that we saw Isaac do with Jacob, and then Jacob to Joseph's sons.

- **Genesis 48:14**, *"Then Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, guiding his hands knowingly, for Manasseh was the firstborn."*
- It was a way of pronouncing a blessing over another.

But sadly, the disciples got all irritated at this simple request of the parents. Perhaps they thought that Jesus needed to have His time protected. Maybe they thought that the little ones weren't worthy of Jesus' time. Whatever they thought, they were wrong!

Look at how Jesus responds...

**19:14-15 - *But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."* <sup>15</sup> *And He laid His hands on them and departed from there.***

Let them come! Don't forbid them! The kingdom belongs to ones like this. Nobody is excluded from being a part of the kingdom and receiving life in Jesus. The disciples were still evaluating and judging based on worldly principles, but Jesus is revealing that He doesn't operate as the world does. There is complete access for all.

This invitation to come is a sweet one that is repeated throughout Scripture (Isaiah 55:1; Revelation 22:17; Matthew 11:28).

The condition is simply having an open heart to believe and coming to Jesus in obedience and faith.

And it is so important that we are making sure we're not restricting access or hindering our children from coming to Jesus.

- We hinder them by living hypocritically.
- We hinder them when we allow the worship of God to take a secondary position in our lives.
- We hinder them when we think they're not able to receive from Him or know Him.

How important it is to bring our children to Jesus. We're called to do so throughout the word of God:

- **Ephesians 6:4**, *"And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord."*
- **Deuteronomy 6:7**, *"You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up."*
- **Proverbs 22:6**, *"Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it."*

Sometimes we can think, they probably won't really understand. But give them the gospel anyways. Those are seeds being planted that can be acted on at a later time.

- We don't need to try and force them into a conversion, we just simply pray for our kids, cultivate that spiritual awareness and keep bringing Jesus into everything you can.
- The years that our children are growing up at home are momentous years where we need to be training them and presenting them to Jesus.

"Let us draw encouragement from these verses to attempt great things in the religious instruction of children. Let us begin from their very earliest years to deal with them as having souls to be lost or saved, and let us strive to bring them to Christ; let us make them acquainted with the Bible as soon as they can understand anything; let us pray with them, and pray for them, and teach them to pray for themselves. We may rest assured that Jesus looks with pleasure on such endeavors, and is ready to bless them."<sup>1</sup>

We now have a contrast between the open hearts of children and the obstructed hearts of others. One reveals the simplistic faith and humility we are to have to receive eternal life, the other reveals the pride and frustration of thinking you can earn it yourself.

## [2. Those with Obstructed Hearts – 19:16-22](#)

<sup>1</sup> Ryle, J. C. (1993). *Matthew* (pp. 170–171). Crossway Books.

**19:16 - Now behold, one came and said to Him, “Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?”**

**One came...** When we look at the gospels together it fills in the picture of who this person was. We know he was young (Matthew 19:20), we know he was rich according to the description that he had great possessions (Matthew 19:22, Mark 10:22, Luke 18:23) and we know he was a ruler (Luke 18:18).

He’s sort of an enigma in today’s standards – a young person that was wealthy and responsible 😊.

- It’s possible he was part of the Sanhedrin and thus a part of the religious ruling body.

So, this man had a lot going for him, yet we see he was unfulfilled and lacking peace.

- As long as a Jew lived a good life of obedience in law keeping and following their traditions, they were pretty much a shoo-in for eternal life in their minds. But this man is having doubts. And it’s centered around his question on qualifications for eternal life. He’s wondering what good thing he must do to ensure eternal life.

Now before Jesus answers this for him, He first paused to address something this man said.

**16:17 - So He said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.”**

The man came to Jesus saying **Good Teacher** (some manuscripts don’t have the word Good here, but it is recorded in Luke 18:18). Most Jews wouldn’t say to their rabbi, ‘good rabbi’ because that claim of goodness was for God alone.

This is essentially what Jesus is saying. No one is good except for God.

- Now some critics of Christianity try to use this to say that Jesus never claimed to be God. Right here Jesus is saying He’s not good, only God is, they will say.
- But this is not what Jesus is doing. He’s actually having this man realize what he’s saying. *If you say I’m good, and only God is good, then you must be saying I’m God.*
- Jesus is getting this man to lift his view of who Jesus is and to see that He is the standard ultimately of goodness and righteousness.

You see the standard of goodness is complete perfection of the law. We look at the 10 commandments and we see what God defined as the standard of goodness or perfection. Then the Jews broke that down into an additional 613 laws. That's a lot of law keeping! And if you want to get into heaven by means of your own works, then you need to keep every one of those laws every day from the day you are born to the day you die. Good luck!!

- **James 2:10**, *"For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all."*

So Jesus lets this man know that he needs to **keep the commandments**. He's kind of entertaining this man a little. Because we know the impossibility of it. But Jesus wants to prick this man's conscience and show that he cannot live up to the demands of the law.

There's only One that is good, and He's God. Since we are not God, or good, that means our goodness is not the basis for eternal life. Look at how Jesus leads this man:

**19:18-19 - He said to Him, "Which ones?" Jesus said, " 'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' <sup>19</sup> 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' "**

Jesus goes through 6 commandments. 5 of them are from the second half of the 10 commandments dealing with our relationship with our fellow man. The last one is taken from Leviticus 19:18.

**19:20 - The young man said to Him, "All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?"**

I believe this man truly felt that he was living up to these commands. On an external level, many Jews felt that they could be keepers or observers of the law by what they did or didn't do.

- Jesus wasn't trying to promote here a law-based salvation; that we can be saved by what we do. Rather He was masterfully using the law to convict this man of his sin. What Jesus did was hold up the law like a mirror to show this man where his fault was. His fault was in thinking he could uphold the law. But the law was given to reveal our sin and to lead us to Jesus our Saviour.
- **Romans 3:19–20**, *"Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the*

*world may become guilty before God. <sup>20</sup> Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin."*

This man believed he was living up to the standards of the law but like we read earlier, when we break one part of the law, we break it all.

***What do I still lack...*** This man felt he was doing his best. That's pretty impressive to say he's kept all of these things since his youth. But he knew there was something still missing. He's been relying on religion and performance. But it's left him empty. This is not the way of Jesus.

The law goes much deeper than an outward fulfillment. Jesus on the Sermon on the Mount revealed how the law goes right to the heart. He showed how you could be an adulterer through lustful thoughts, even if you never committed it outwardly.

So now Jesus takes this man to a part of the law (in a round-about way) that he struggled with.

***19:21-22 - Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." <sup>22</sup> But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.***

Jesus left out earlier the last of the 10 commandments which is about covetousness. This is one of those things that's tricky to spot because it really is that issue of the heart. Paul himself said, *"I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, 'You shall not covet'"* (Romans 7:7b).

You could also say that this man was breaking the first two commandments. His riches had become a god to him and an idol in his life. He wasn't ready to give up these things in order to follow Jesus. They had become what was driving his life.

This was not a universal call for all potential followers of Jesus to sell all you have and give to the poor in order to be saved. This was said because these possessions had become a barrier between this man and God. Such is the case with an unhealthy desire and focus on wealth.

***1 Timothy 6:9–10, "But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. <sup>10</sup> For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which***

*some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."*

This has been called the "*Great Refusal*"

- He came to the right person, showed the right attitude, asked the right question, received the right answer, but made the wrong response.
- And Jesus let Him go despite His love for this man. He could have chased Him down and said, '*Oh you're so close, you're good enough, come on, don't go!*' But Jesus cannot compromise the standards of the kingdom, even for such a promising candidate.

This rich young ruler went away sorrowful because he was not willing to surrender all to Jesus.

This is what we are called to do! To surrender all. Don't give your life to Jesus under the illusion that you're now going to have an easy life. It will require sacrifice. But it's a sacrifice of the temporal for a gain of the eternal.

- The bottom line is that as we surrender to Jesus, we have a blessed hope we're looking forward to. It's only going to get better with Jesus!
- What we are living for will basically determine where we will live.

Has that been determined for you? The lesson is clear, don't think you can enter into the kingdom by your goodness. Only One is good and He provides for you that righteousness needed to enter in. Have you put your faith and trust in Him today?