

Mark 10:17-27 – “Jesus Abandoned”

(Pew Bible Page: 846)

Intro: It all seemed to begin so well for him. The young man came, so eager to get to Jesus that he came running. Falling down in worship, he earnestly sought the desire of his heart: *“What must I do to inherit eternal life?”* He was everything you could want in someone seeking the Savior. He was religious. He was moral. And then, suddenly, he was gone. Just like that. Disappeared. Walked away into the into the mists of history, never to be seen again. What happened to him? Why did his story turn out this way, as in fact millions of other stories have turned out through the years? How could someone be so eager to meet Christ one moment – a then disappear the next? The answer is in the Parable of the Soils: **Matthew 13 - 3** *And he told them many things in parables, saying: “A sower went out to sow. 4 And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. 5 Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, 6 but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away.... 20 As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, 21 yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.* The Rich Young Ruler had that kind of heart – a shallow heart – one the rejoices in Jesus one moment, then throws it all over the next. Tonight, let’s listen as Jesus analyzes the condition of those with shallow hearts.

Proposition: The shallow heart abandons the Savior and only a miracle can change the outcome of the story.

Billboard:	(vv.17-20)	Acceptance
	(vv.21-22)	Abandonment
	(vv.23-27)	Analysis

(vv.17-20) Acceptance – A man comes to present himself to Jesus. Look at this man, for there is much to commend him: **Mark 10:17 - 17** *And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”* 1) He was eager to come to Jesus – he “ran up” to Him. There was, in his heart, an urgency to come into the Lord’s presence. 2) He was excited to worship Him and humble enough to kneel before Him – something the Pharisees, Scribes and Chief Priests never would do. 3) He spoke about Jesus accurately, calling Him, “Good Teacher”, though as we’ll see he may not have understood the implications of what he said when he used those words. 4) He earnestly desired eternal life. 5) He was moral and religious in nature (cf. v.20). There was much to commend him in every way. Any preacher would be glad to receive such a man as a genuine believer in Christ. Why did this Rich Young Ruler do these things? Because his heart told him to. But Jesus began to probe the true quality of his heart: **Mark 10:18 - 18** *And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.* First, He challenged his understanding of what he thought of Jesus. “It isn’t right to call anyone ‘good’ but God. Are you therefore acknowledging Me as God when you call me ‘good’?” In other words, the man’s statement was CORRECT – but did he really understand and mean what he was saying, Jesus wondered. Jesus probed further: **Mark 10:19 - 19** *You know the commandments: ‘Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.’” “Do you have evidence of a credible*

Mark 10:17-27 – “Jesus Abandoned”

(Pew Bible Page: 846)

profession? Are you living according to what you claim to believe?” Jesus pointed the Young Ruler toward the second table of the Law, dealing with his relationships with others. “How are you doing with these things?” His answer was, “I am doing well!” **Mark 10:20 - 20** *And he said to him, “Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth.”* It was not an unreasonable answer for the time in which he lived. Remember, until Jesus’ “Sermon on the Mount” no one thought that keeping the Law had anything to do with what you were feeling and thinking in your inner man. Keeping the Law was totally an external matter to Jesus’ generation. As long as one didn’t commit murder, adultery, theft, perjury, fraud or disobey one’s parents, he could reasonably say, “*All these I have kept from my youth.*” The Apostle Paul said the same thing about his pre-conversion self in Philippians 3:6 – “*As to righteousness under the law, blameless.*” Jesus’ questions were targeted at the Young Ruler’s heart, for true belief in all Jesus is must always precede righteous living in a genuine believer’s life, otherwise righteous deeds are mere religiosity.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] In every way this man looked like someone who would have eternal life. And yet he missed it.

[ILLUSTRATION] “If looks could kill!” Looks *can* kill.

[APPLICATION] This man looked like someone who was following Christ. He was eager; he was humble; he said the right thing about Jesus; and he was moral and religious in his life with others. He was a good neighbor and a respected church member. Everything on the outside looked good, but there was a deeper problem on the inside that led him to disaster. Salvation is a question of the heart. Some men are able to conceal their true condition for a while, but in the end, Jesus searches out the heart and brings it into the light. This man looked good, but his looks were killing him, concealing the true lostness of his soul. Jesus brought his lost condition into the light.

(vv.21-22) Abandonment – He walked away from Jesus. **Mark 10:21 - 21** *And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, “You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.”* Note first that Jesus loved him. It was nothing on Jesus’ side that led to his rejection of the Savior. The door to eternal life was wide open to him on Christ’s part. When anyone abandons faith in Jesus it is never because Jesus has abandoned them. Jesus loved him, and He loved him enough to put His finger on the true condition of his heart: “*You lack one thing...*” Jesus challenged him concerning the first table of the Law, dealing with the heart’s relationship to God. Was God this young man’s ultimate priority? Or did something else hold his heart captive? Was his heart deep enough to permit the root of true faith in God to take hold, or did he have a shallow heart that could not sustain a whole-hearted submission to God and God’s will? Jesus challenged this Rich Young Ruler about who or what really possessed his heart and the answer became clear: he loved his possessions more than he loved God. What really held his heart, God or mammon? Jesus brought verse 18 fully to bear on him saying, “Have you truly acknowledged Me as God? Then prove it by making Me your one great love in life!” He failed the test: **Mark 10:22 - 22** *Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. “He went away sorrowful.”* He

Mark 10:17-27 – “Jesus Abandoned”

(Pew Bible Page: 846)

abandoned Christ and threw over all hope of eternal life. Why? Because his shallow heart could not accept the cost of following Jesus. When the cost became too great, the fickle heart that once ran to Jesus, now turned and ran away. The Rich Young Ruler had no depth, no permanent commitment to Jesus.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] He abandoned Christ because following Him would cost him too much – everything he truly loved.

[ILLUSTRATION] If you want to take the measure of a man, watch his eyes while he is speaking. Ed Underwood tells the story of meeting with a man who for years pastored a small church in a rural Western community. This pastor supported himself by working full-time in the parts department of a car dealership Monday through Friday. On Saturdays he would drive several hours to reach the small community in which his church was located. He would preach morning and evening on Sunday and have a common meal with the congregation before heading back home each Sunday night. As Ed and the Pastor discussed the work so faithfully done for so many years, Ed asked this brother, “And how many people do you have in your congregation?” Turning his eyes away from Ed’s gaze and looking off into the distance, he said simply, “Some Sundays we have as many as six.” Ed noted that he had seen this turning away of the eyes before among forest fire fighters and soldiers in his army Ranger unit. “When a man wants to tell you something really important,” he said, “he’ll turn his eyes away from you and look into the distance. Watch his eyes if you want to know what he thinks is important.” Watch Jesus’ eyes as He analyzes the Young Ruler’s heart in verses 23-27.

(vv.23-27) Analysis – It is interesting to follow Jesus’ eyes through this story. In verse 21 we see Jesus looking at the man with love. In verse 27 we see Jesus looking at His disciples. But in verse 23 we see Jesus turning His eyes away and looking around in exasperation as the Rich Young Ruler slowly walked away. Jesus looked into the distance. What did He see? Did He see this Young Ruler’s final moments in this world? Did He look into eternity and see him separated from God forever? We can only speculate. But when He had looked around, He spoke: **Mark 10:23 - 23** *And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!”* Jesus spoke to the shallow heart’s condition when He drew His disciples’ attention to the disastrous nature of a heart that considers anything of more value than God, saying, “How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!” In this Jesus analyzed the condition of the shallow heart that abandon’s following Jesus. **Luke 12:13-21** tells the story of the rich fool who was rich toward himself and poor toward God. After telling of the fool’s loss of everything, Jesus concluded: **Luke 12:21 - 21** *So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.* God will accept no idolatry in the hearts of those who come to Him; not the idol of money; nor the idol of prestige; nor the idol of power; nor the idol of beauty, for all of these are simply manifestations of the greatest idol of all: self-love. There can be no idolatry taking the place of God in the heart. God must be the greatest treasure of the believing heart. The disciples were frankly shocked at this: **Mark 10:24–26 - 24** *And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, “Children, how difficult 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 person to*

Mark 10:17-27 – “Jesus Abandoned”

(Pew Bible Page: 846)

enter the kingdom of God.” **26** And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to him, “Then who can be saved?” Wealth was seen as a sign of God’s blessing in their world. If a rich man couldn’t be saved, then who could be, they wondered. Jesus’ answer was unequivocal: “**25** It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.” In other words, it’s simply impossible. The disciples were astonished at this, until Jesus revealed to them the answer to the riddle: **Mark 10:27 - 27** Jesus looked at them and said, “With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God.”

[DOCTRINAL POINT] Only God can cure the shallow heart. Salvation is impossible from man’s side. It takes a miracle for anyone to be saved – but God does miracles.

[ILLUSTRATION] Pop quiz! Name one miracle in the Bible that God decided to reverse after doing it. Time’s up! Could you think of one? I can’t think of one either. Evidently, God never goes back on a miracle once He has done it.

[APPLICATION] It takes a miracle to heal the shallow heart, and when our shallow hearts have been miraculously cured of their fallen condition, we can live without fear of the future because we know that God never goes back on a miracle once He has done it. Search the Scriptures in vain for any instance of God undoing a miracle. You will find none. Once the shallow heart has been cured it never returns to its poverty-stricken condition. Do you realize this?

Conclusion: It all seemed to begin so well for him, and yet, when the story was over he walked away into a Christless eternity. The shallow heart betrays its victims in the worst way. It would have been better for those like this Young Ruler if they had never heard the good news of the gospel. To take it into one’s hands, and then cast it aside as too costly, too tragic, too disastrous to contemplate. And yet, millions do this. It takes a miracle to change this condition – but God still does miracles. *Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.*¹ Miracles can still happen.

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Mt 9:38). (2016). Crossway Bibles.