

As I look around, for some of us our child years are a lot further away than for others. But I want us to think back to those times. What are some of your fondest memories of childhood?

For me it was mixed lollies, having 2 cents and if you chose well you could get up to six lollies, and having 20 cents worth of mixed lollies was like winning lotto. For me 20 cents of mixed lollies was this huge white bag that I could just hold in one hand.

What do you remember from your childhood? (ask around)

When we think of our childhood, I think for most of us, it was a simpler time, less cluttered, definitely less responsibilities and for me it was a time of great optimism, looking forward to what the future could bring.

So what's changed we are all older, a few more years have past, we had more good times, we had some bad times. But we are definitely no longer children.

We are now adults? Our childhood now is not much more than just whimsical reminiscing

So what are your thoughts when hear in the middle of our reading we hear Jesus say

14-15. "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. **I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.**"

Is it just a romantic view of carefree innocence?

And how should we think about this when we read later in Paul's teaching.

1Cor. 13:11 When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me.

Eph. 4:14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.

In both readings Paul want us to be mature, not to stay like a child but to grow to grow up.

Is there a conflict here?

Or even now you might really confused because you saying

"hey John haven't you read the headings, in our bibles, this sermon should be about divorce and the rich young ruler, who hangs on to his money."

What you say is true, we do have three distinct stories, Jesus being approached by Pharisees with the question of divorce, then we got the little children episode and we finish up with the rich man wanting to inherit eternal life.

Are these just three distinct stories or are they related?

Friends bible reading 101, context, context, context.

We cannot understand the bible without reading it in context.

We cannot read just the details without the whole.

So since Mark chapter 8 what has been ringing in our ears?

Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again.

This is what the Christ must do.

"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.

This is what it means to be a follower Jesus.

Here we have three stories but what is on show? What unites our stories?

What unite these stories is Jesus and how people approach him. What are their attitude? and what does that tell us about their hearts?

When we read today's reading there isn't much happy moments are there?

We have the Pharisees, the Children and the rich man, it is only the children that Jesus affirms, it is only the children that Jesus holds up as an example of who we should be.

So what is it about being like a child that Jesus wants us to be?

As I said before being a child brings up many different things in our minds, but what is about being a child that Jesus is affirming.

When we think of a child, what do we think about,
(find a child, asking the parents)

Are they well behaved? Are they angels? Are they a delight?

What are the qualities that Jesus want us to be?

What are some of the **universals of being a child?**

Totally dependent

Helpless

Small, Weak

Need protection

Need guidance

Need to be nurtured

What do a child bring to this world?

Not much just themselves.

But when you look at a child what else do you see?

You see a future, they will grow, they will change, they are full of potential.

But right now they are almost blank slate and how they will grow, learn and develop yes there is some genetics that determine a few things in their lives but they are relying on you to give them environment and the framework to grow in.

Because at the moment they are soft and malleable, waiting to grow into the person they will be.

That is also how we should be to Jesus.

Friends this is how Jesus want us to approach him.

When we approach Jesus he wants us to be like a child, totally dependent with soft malleable hearts.

(Give back child)

In contrast let's look at our first story.

Mark 10:2 Some Pharisees came and **tested** him by asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?"

So what is the Pharisees approach to Jesus?

They've come to Jesus to test him.

We are not sure if they have come to try and trap him like they will do later

Or they are just flexing their theological, academic muscles.

Either way what they want from Jesus is self serving, it doesn't look like that wanted anything from Jesus except to see how to stack up to him with this test about Divorce.

They are definitely not humble. They see Jesus as a challenge.

They most likely see themselves above Jesus, and Jesus is a rogue, a man from Nazareth.

A man, who needs to be set in his place

With their chest out they test him with the question
“Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?”

It is a loaded question.

It is a devious question.

On face value to answer is yes, it is lawful but if Jesus answers yes, then he is saying that divorce is ok, but it's not.

So Jesus answers with a question?

Jesus ask them “what did Moses command you?”

Jesus hasn't answered their questions. But they say

“Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away.”

This is the Pharisees MO, this is how they operate, what is important is the law and how I interpret the law, I am ok as long as I keep the law, God is happy with me as long as I keep the law.

So I can divorce my wife as long as I write a certificate. What makes it wrong or right is the certificate.

Deut. 24:1 If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house,

“Sorry but I don’t want to be married to you here is a certificate.”
It is all ok. I fulfilled the law, I am ok, God is ok with me.

What do you think? Is it ok

Is there any real concern about the wife?

It’s legalism isn’t it, what is right or wrong doesn’t matter, it is the letter of the law that matters.

Jesus still doesn’t answer their question but makes a statement
Mark 10:5 “It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law,” Jesus replied

Notice how Jesus says your hearts are hard, addressing the Pharisees in front of him.

It is because people are hard hearted and sinful divorce was necessary.

And then Jesus takes them back to creation.

Divorce was never in God's plan, marriage which last a lifetime was there before the fall.

That is God's design, that is what God wants. God hates divorce

Mal 2:16

But it was tolerated because people were hard hearted.

If there was no divorce then there can be no remarriage.

Women in ancient times suffered greatly if they were single, especially if they have been cast off.

But do you see God wants people to stay married.

And The Pharisees are looking for ways out.

The problem with legalism is that you work very hard to keep on doing what you want.

You remain hard hearted, you remain in your sin, but you can justify it with the law.

You become the determiner of good and evil not God.

The Pharisees, who think they are ok, because they keep the law, who is up for a biff with Jesus, doesn't really want anything from him, because they don't really need him,

Are they receiving the Kingdom of heaven like a child?

No far from it they are manipulative, devious and self assured.

Will they enter the kingdom Heaven?

No.

We all can be legalistic and God hates it because we are justifying yourself. We say we are right when we are wrong.

- Sleeping together when we get engaged.
- Disabled parking sticker
- Tax \$300 work expense.

Ok now let's look at v17

Mark 10:17 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?**"

This seems better, he ran, he is excited, running is not dignified but it shows his determination and he doesn't care but what others think, so he is honoring Jesus, and he fall on his knees, and states "Good teacher" and asks, "**what must I do to inherit eternal life?**"

Good question, well asked, he wants Jesus to tell him. He shows humility and he wants Jesus' answer.

But Jesus knows his heart, and get's straight to the point,

Do you know there are two ways to heaven?

There is Jesus, or you can be good.

Good not compared to other men, but good compared to God.

If you are perfect before God, you will inherit eternal life, because you deserve it, because you don't owe God anything because you have fully obeyed him in everything.

So Jesus asks

Mark 10:19 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.'"

Mark 10:20 "Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy."

Yeah I have done all this, if we look at his life closer we will probably find that our man was mistaken here, but Jesus knew a more critical point.

Mark 10:21 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."

Mark 10:22 At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

For this man it was yeah, yeah oh!

Is there anything you notice about Jesus list of commandments, it's missing a few isn't it.

- 1 You shall not have other God's
- 2 No Idols
- 3 you shall not misuse God's name
- 4 Sabbath

No other God's, no idols.

How do you know if you worship another God?

How do you know if you have an idol?

Ask yourself if God made it clear to me what I should give up, could I do it?

If not there is where your true trust lies.

For our man here it was his wealth, he had great wealth.

Notice in v 21, it says that Jesus loved him. This wasn't a cruel test, it is what this man needed to do to inherit eternal life, to fully trust Jesus' word,

"Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

For this man this is what being a disciple looks like.

Remember

“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.

36 What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?

37 Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?

He walks away sad, he couldn't deny his wealth.

Jesus then re-enforces this

Mark 10:23 Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!”

Mark 10:24 The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God!

Mark 10:25 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.”

Friends, being Jesus disciple is costly.

It cost you your money and it is true the more you have to more that is going to ask of you.

This mini parable just as relevant then as it is now, the more money you have the more you can buy, the more you can buy, the more stuff you have, and if you have a lot of stuff, it gives you

status, it gives position, it gives you influence, it gives you power, it gives you all the things that this world values.

So if you have all that why do you need God?

Friends what do we see in this man, he wanted Jesus to tell him the answer for eternal life.

And we he go it he didn't like it.

It is yeah! I will follow you as long as I don't have to change anything, Jesus my life is good, I want to keep it the way it is, but I also want eternal life.

It doesn't work that way.

For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.

Friends when we follow Jesus, he demands more than just our money he demands our whole life.

Our rich man was not like a child towards Jesus, he could not trust Jesus over his trust of money, he was not full dependant on Jesus and in the end he wanted his money more than he wanted Jesus.

Our rich man, had an idolater's heart, he didn't want to change, he was excited because he thought he had tick all the boxes and just wanted Jesus to give him is tick of approval.

But when it wasn't to be he went away sad.

Friends, we need examine where our trust lies, is it in our bank accounts,

I hear it all the time, I just need to keep \$10,000 in the bank and then I can deal with anything life has to throw at me.

Or just need the get the right insurance policy, if my super is good.

Friends where is your trust, do you know it is God who gives and God who takes away.

Jesus wants you to trust him fully, be dependant on him.

The disciples' words are true if what Jesus words are true "Who then can be saved"

Mark 10:27 Jesus looked at them and said, "**With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.**"

Friends to take up our cross daily, to deny ourselves is impossible in our own strength we won't do it.

Friends even in our own obedience to Jesus we need to depend on God.

Friends we need approach Jesus like a child.

Fully dependent, vulnerable and with soft hearts

It is the only way to be saved.

And can I say it is only towards Jesus we should be like a child.

Those verses I quoted to you before, we should be like a child towards Jesus,

But friends the bible tells us towards, the world, flesh and devil, we put on the full armour of God, we are in a battle, we need to be Bruce Willis, Arny, or whoever your chosen action hero is.

In Jesus words Matt. 10:16 I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as **innocent as** dove.