

West Valley Presbyterian Church
God's Acceptance and Our Response

I Surrender All

Matt Hall

If God asked you: “Why should I give you eternal life?” what would you say?

Your answers would probably fall into these three categories:

- The Bad Thing’s You Haven’t Done
- The Good Things You Have Done
- The Religious Things You Do

There are a ton of different answers in these basic categories but they are all based on one thing: **you**. What you have done or not done. The problem is, as Pastor Kim talked about a few weeks ago: sin is a heart disease: it comes from within us. At heart we are all sinful rebels—no matter how many “good” things we do, we cannot clean our own hearts.

The bible tells us in Romans 3:23, “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” and then in verse 6:23 we are told, “the wages of sin is death.” The Bible

tells us we all sin, and none of us, not one is acceptable to God. No one deserves eternal life!

In one of the passages of scripture we will be looking at today a man ask Jesus: **“What must I do to inherit eternal life?”** This is where I want to camp out today. **“What must I do to inherit eternal life?”** What do we do? What do we have to offer? What can we do to be worthy of receiving eternal life?

Today in Adult Education we are going to be looking at the story of the Rich Young Ruler. Let’s start there. Will you turn with me to Mark Chapter 10? Verse 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?”

There’s the question of the day. What. Gets. You. Eternal. life.

“Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone.”

Jesus is not denying his divinity here. He is not denying that he is good. He’s using God, himself, as a contrasting image. Are you good when compared to God? Well Jesus tells us the answer. We all fail to meet the standard. **No one is good; not as good as God.**

You and I. We like the comparison game.

I’m not sending inappropriate text messages to women like Anthony Weiner.

I'm not stopping in at brothels like Justin Bieber.

I didn't cheat like Lance Armstrong, Barry Bonds, and A Rod.

I don't behave nearly as bad as the Real Housewives.

I'm not lying like all of... most of... our politicians.

It's easy to compare ourselves to someone who is dishonest, or violent, or a sex offender, and to decide that compared to them we're basically good. **We use the word "good" when we mean "not as bad as"**. The problem for us is that the standard is God, and when we compare ourselves to him: **we are not as good as**.

Verse 19: "You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother.'"

"Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy."

Really? This man wants us to believe that he has always honored his parents. That he has never lied. I think he's a liar. It's not clear in scripture, but I'm pretty certain he's a liar.

Verse 21: "Jesus looked at him and loved him. **Jesus looked at him and loved him.**

Know this. When Jesus is looking at you. He's not judging his love for you based on your performance. He sees you, he knows you're not as good as God, **and he loves you.** Even if you are completely delusional about your own goodness.

You'll notice that the commandments that Jesus referenced are the Ten Commandments; and that he has left some of them off. Well now that the man has stated that he knows the commandments, and that he has done all of the things Jesus listed; Jesus reveals the mans' struggle with one commandment in particular.

“One thing you lack,” 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.”

This man has asked Jesus what to do. But when Jesus tells him, he doesn't respond with joy or a desire to do it as quickly as possible. Instead, his face falls, he turns away, and goes home sad. Why? Because “he had great wealth”.

He was rich, and being asked to give away all his money was too much for him. What this actually shows is that he isn't keeping all of God's commands at all. **His money was his idol;** and we have a jealous God who has forbidden worship of

anything but him. And if you're not willing to part with your money; you're worshipping it. A good test of an idol is whether you're willing to part with it.

Remember Father Abraham, he had many sons, ... well not at first. In fact he was desperate to have an heir. God will miraculously gives him a son, Isaac; and then God ask Abraham to sacrifice... to kill Isaac; and Abraham... he sets out to do it... Abraham shows that Isaac is not his idol, **Abraham worships God at all cost. He is fully devoted.** That is the standard... that standard that you and I fail at everyday; we idolize our money, our belongings, our job, our status, our comfort.

John Calvin says that the human heart is an idol factory: what idol are you manufacturing?

Following this encounter, the disciples were amazed, and they asked, "Who then can be saved?"

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

Let's compare this story to another. Will you turn with me to the first chapter of Mark, starting in verse 40.

“A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, “If you are willing, you can make me clean.”

This man had leprosy. Leprosy is a disgusting skin disease. His face and body were covered with incurable sores. What’s worse the disfiguring skin disease made him “unclean”. **That meant he was an outcast.** His disease isolated him completely from his friends and family. And it cut him off from God, too. Someone who was “unclean” wasn’t allowed in the temple or a synagogue.

There was no cure, and there was no hiding it either. There was nothing he could do to get rid of it. So he did the only thing he could do – he asked Jesus for help. He asked Jesus to make him “clean”.

Let’s continue reading verse 41 and 42. “Moved with compassion,* Jesus reached out and touched him. **“I am willing,”** he said. **“Be healed!”** Instantly the leprosy disappeared, and the man was healed.”

When the man asked Jesus for help, he was asking the only person who could help him. You can see how much Jesus cared for this man. Scripture says, he was full of compassion as he reached out and touched him. **Jesus touched him.** He was untouchable... This was probably the first time this man had been touched for years – no one else would have risked it.

“Be clean!” he said, and healed the man instantly. Can you imagine?

What did the man do to be healed? Did he do anything to deserve Jesus' help? He did nothing. All he did was ask. He asked for help from the one person who could give it.

You and I. We're like that man. His skin disease made him "unclean". It cut him off from family and friends, and also from God. Only Jesus could make him clean". Our disease –sin -- makes us unclean. Our sin cuts us off from God, and our disease is terminal. Like the man with the skin disease, we need to ask Jesus to make us clean, to give us eternal life.

The Rich Man he asked "What must **I DO** to inherit eternal life?" But there is nothing we can do to earn eternal life. **God does the earning for us.**

God doesn't accept us because of anything we do. Instead, we need to be like the leper. He knew he couldn't help himself. So he begged Jesus. He asked for help, and **Jesus made him clean.** The man didn't deserve help – it was an undeserved gift from the one and only person who could help him, Jesus Christ.

The word the Bible uses for this is **grace**. Grace is God's undeserved gift to us. It is God's amazing kindness to us in spite of our rebellion. It is God treating us in a way we don't deserve because of what Jesus has done. God ignores us, looks at Jesus, and counts his righteousness as ours.

And there's something else wonderful about grace. If God accepts me because of what Jesus has done, and not what I have done, **then it means he still accepts me, even when I mess up.**

I have a joke with Tracy that the only thing holding me back from being perfect, is my own awareness of how close I am to perfection. But the truth is I'm messed up. I say and do horrible selfish things all of the time. I am not nearly as holy, or pure, or righteous as I wish I was. I'm nowhere near perfect. I'm a mess. My only hope is Jesus.

If God asked you: "Why should I give you eternal life?", what would you say? If you start with "because I...", then you haven't really understood what Christianity is all about. "Because I" is not an answer God accepts.

But if your answer starts "because Jesus...", then perhaps you're beginning to understand that trusting in Jesus is the only answer that God accepts. We can only be saved by God's grace – his loving, undeserved gift to us.

I want to close with this. I know many of us in this room understand Grace. So I want to challenge you, and this challenge comes largely from what we will be looking at in Adult Education next week. In the face of amazing grace we turn

around and many of us begin a relationship with God that can be defined with three words.

Casual. Convenient. Comfortable.

Casual – Meaning that we express a minimum of interest, we are irregular in our devotion, we lack intimacy with Christ.

Convenient – We make faith suited to our needs and our purposes.

Comfortable – We want to hear sermons that make us feel good, and God forbid we ever be asked to do something that we are not comfortable doing.

I understand the temptation for a casual, convenient comfortable faith. I have been guilty of all three. The bold sacrifice and grace of Christ should spur us on to a bold faith.

When are Christianity can be described by these three words... it's nothing short of offensive. *We have a radical God* who sacrificed himself on a cross, I'm certain that it was not comfortable. It was definitely not convenient, and it was not done casually.

There is nothing casual, convenient, or comfortable about true Christianity. In Mark8: 34, the verse Bill read at the beginning, we receive a simple direction: ...follow me. Jesus' faith was not casual, it was not convenient, and it was not comfortable. It was passionate, committed, and at times, even, painful. And it changed the world; for many of us, it changed us in profound ways.

Many of us call ourselves a Christian without much thought of really truly following Jesus. We take the grace; and lose the rest. As followers we are called to imitate his love, imitate grace, mercy, compassion, truth and purity. For followers this is a relationship of Adventure, a committed pursuit of a passionate relationship with a Holy God; of people willing to suffer temporarily, for eternal gain.

Jesus died that we might have life; and our response to his grace; should be a life lived boldly for him.