

**An Authentic Faith  
Mark 10:17-31**

**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: '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.'**

**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 someone who is rich 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."**

**28** Then Peter spoke up, "We have left everything to follow you!"

**29 "Truly I tell you," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel**

**30** will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life.

**31 But many who are first will be last, and the last first."**

Good Morning My Sisters and Brothers in Christ! I greet you this morning with the lyrics of an old psalm – I've got a feeling everything is going to be all right! Be all right, be all right, be all right. If you know what I am talking about, if you have some joy deep down in your soul, if you have some peace that surpasses all understanding, if you have done all you can and now you are ready to stand on the promises of God, then perhaps you want to take a moment and praise Him. Praise Him! Praise Him! Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!

Although Matthew and Luke record the same incident we want to consider it from Mark, because I believe there is a message in Mark that fits where we are today. We join the story after Jesus has taught the disciples about divorce and the need to bring the children to Him. At first glance this might seem like an usual grouping of subjects, but perhaps it is because it is so unusual that we need to give it special attention.

I want to suggest that the disciples were talking with Jesus and looking for loopholes or short cuts. They wanted Jesus to **endorse divorce** – a short cut to working on a marriage and honoring the vows of forsaking all others and staying together – what God has joined together... (Remember some things God did not join together.)

They also wanted Jesus to **avoid the children** that came to Him. Perhaps they were jealous of the attention Jesus paid to the children and thought it should belong to them. Perhaps they thought children were not smart enough to know what was going on. Or perhaps that did not like children and wanted Jesus to fit inside their box. Whatever the reason Jesus said no, bring the children to me.

*13-16 The people brought children to Jesus, hoping he might touch them. The disciples shooed them off. But Jesus was irate and let them know it: "Don't push these children away. Don't ever get between them and me. These children are at the very center of life in the kingdom. Mark this: Unless you accept God's kingdom in the simplicity of a child, you'll never get in." Then, gathering the children up in his arms, he laid his hands of blessing on them. (The Message) <sup>1</sup>*

Within that context the rich young ruler approaches Jesus asking for a shortcut, a loophole to heaven. We should not be amazed by the question for each of us at one time or another has considered if there were some things we **did not have to give up in order to get to heaven.**

Do I really have to stop drinking to excess?

Can't I have a spouse and a spare?

Does Jesus really want to be first in all things or just some things?

Come on, you going make me do right, when I really want to do wrong?

If you know what I am talking about you can just say AMEN.

The call to be a follower of Christ is a 24-7-365 job and it does not come with a paid leave; special dispensation from the Pope or time off for good behavior. With that as background would you join me for a few minutes and lets talk about this theme:

## **FAN OR FOLLOWER?**

### **SHALL WE PRAY?**

**Father God, we are here once again in your house desiring to hear a Word from you. Some of us have come with heavy hearts because one we love has gone from our midst. Some have come rejoicing because a prayer has been answered. Some have come because we have been taught to come and listen and wait for you to send your Holy Spirit. Thank you Father for the ability to come. Now I ask that you teach, train and transform us so that we might be more like you Son Jesus the Christ. Abba, I ask that you use me this morning.**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+10&version=MSG>

**Allow my words to be your Words, my thoughts to be your thoughts, and my heart to be like your heart, in the matchless name of Jesus we prayer. Amen and Amen.**

### **FAN OR FOLLOWER?**

If you have been around me for a little while then you know that I am a fan of Denzel Washington. I like the courage of Coach Herman Boone (Remember the Titans). I like the brilliant mind of Lincoln Rhyme (The Bone Collector). I watch Dudley every Christmas (The Preacher's Wife). But I am just a FAN. I am a FAN because of his skill as an actor, because of how he can wear a suit, because of his ability to make me smile when he smiles. How do I know the difference?

I don't know his middle name. I don't know his parent's name. I don't know where he was born. I don't know if he is religious, spiritual, or a heathen. I don't know his political affiliation. I don't know what causes he supports. I am a FAN.

Jim, my son in law is a hockey fan and he is raising his children to be hockey fans. Jack is two, but shortly after learning to say da-da he learned to say, "Go Hawks." Jack knows when the sports event on TV is hockey. He knows when the teams playing score a goal but he does not always know if it was his team that scored. He cheers when his father cheers and he makes inappropriate noises when his father makes inappropriate noises. If Jack enters a room with a TV he wants the Hawks to be on the set. But Jack can't read so he does not know if it is the Hawks or another team. Jack is 2 and he can't really follow the action and understand the rules so he shouts when others shouts and he moans when others moan. Jack is not a follower he is just a FAN.

Are you a fan of something: music, theater, ballet, or sports? Maybe you are a fan of westerns, medical shows, or old sitcom reruns? Most of us are fans of something.

Included in the crowds that followed Jesus were three classes of people. There were **the religious fanatics**. They were students and teachers of the law. They were the elders and scribes. They were concerned about how it looked, how it sounded, and what was in it for them. They did not hear the message. They were more concerned about the earthly background of the messenger and the people He hung out with.

It did not matter if the message was a fulfillment of the Law that they maintained they were experts in. It did not matter that He was going about doing good. All that matter was how they thought it should be done; their 660 rules and not the original 10; their position and power and the threat they believed he posed. **In the crowd were religious fanatics.**

Also in the crowd were **fans**. Fans, they wanted to be where the action was. They wanted to be able to say that they had seen the man. They hoped that today would be another day where they could get a free lunch. They wanted to be able to say – I missed Him turning water into wine, but I was there when he healed the blind man and helped the lame to walk. I saw those guys tear up the roof and lower their friend to him. They were **fans**.

Finally in the crowd there were some **followers**. There were some who were sincere in their desire to hear the message; be changed by the message and take the message to others. There were some who had given up all they use to be and do and hang out with in order to be transformed.

But within the followers were some who really were not followers. Some of them looked like followers and acted like followers as long as the program was going the way they thought the program should go, But when a true follower who loved Jesus came and washed Jesus' feet with her jar of oil and dried his feet with her hair; there were those who objected. One of those followers became something else. He became a betrayer, an enemy, and a wolf in sheep's clothing, a liar.

On the day of our passage there was a **fan** in the crowd who wanted to be a follower. We could say he had been a religious fanatic – for he had believed that he could earn eternal life. But he had moved from that position to a fan. Finally he wanted to be a follower. He wanted to follow Jesus from earth to glory. He wanted to be with Jesus with the roll was called up yonder. He came asking what must I do to?

My Bible said that Jesus looked at him and loved him. And because Jesus loved him he told him you have to give up that which is holding you back. You have got to sell all your stuff, give it to the poor, if you wish to follow me.

The challenge for us as we move on this journey of transformation is to decide if we are ready to move from FAN status to FOLLOWER status.

Are we ready to give up our stuff?

Here is a list of some of the stuff we may need to evaluate and give up

Attitudes (Negative)

Bearing false witness

coveting what God has given others

Desire to always be in front, in charge

Eagerness to gossip

Fault finding

Grudge bearing

Hate

Idolatry

Judgmental attitudes

Looking for love in all the wrong places

Negative behaviors

Opposing for the sake of opposing

politicalize that which of God

Quick to speak before praying

Reluctance to support what is not our idea

Total disregard of authority

Unwillingness to forgive and move on

Victimizing our seniors and children and disabled  
Wailing about the small stuff when there are real problems in the world

The rich young man walked away disappointed because Jesus did not provide him with an easy answer, a short cut, or a loophole. Jesus told him as he still tells us you have to give up some stuff – some stuff that you value – some stuff that you say makes you – you. You have got to give yourself away so that I may fill you. You have to move from FAN to FOLLOWER if you wish to spend eternity with me.