



# *The Westminster Pulpit*

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## ***“Having Your Hands Full”*** **Sermon on Mark 10:17-31**

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We all need a little help from time to time. You may have hired a tutor to get your grades up or a financial consultant to secure your retirement. You might call on a golf pro to straighten your drives out or a counselor to really straighten out your life.

In our scripture today, you will hear about a man who comes to a teacher for help. He will not like the answer he hears, but the answer he hears will be the Word of God.

### *Mark 10:17-31*

As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, ‘Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?’ Jesus said to him, ‘Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: “You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honour your father and mother.”’ He said to him,

‘Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth.’ Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, ‘You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.’ When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, ‘How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!’ And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, ‘Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! 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.’ They were greatly astounded and said to one another, ‘Then who can be

saved?' Jesus looked at them and said, 'For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible.'

Peter began to say to him, 'Look, we have left everything and followed you.' Jesus said, 'Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.'

When you have many possessions, your hands are full because it's always something!

The drip, drip, drip of the faucet, and then there's the "chirp" from some smoke detector somewhere. The weather turns cold, and the low tire light comes on the dashboard. The light burns out in the ceiling. To which you hear, "You don't need to be up on a ladder at your age." This is a blow to the ego because if there's one thing you're good at, it's screwing in a lightbulb. "Do you want it fixed or not?" And the next thing you know, you're trying to fix your marriage.

Seems we always have our hands full, like the man in our text.

The man who has done everything by the book - by that, I mean the Good Book. He's a righteous man, and as the Psalm says, "The righteous are like trees planted by streams of water in all that they do, they prosper!" And when you prosper, you have your hands full - because you're called to chair the board or lead the campaign, all the while you're getting your kitchen refurbished. And the bilge pump on the boat is out again...

But all in all, it's "the good life," and he'd like it to see it go on forever.

And he's heard about this thing called "eternal life."

What is eternal life? It's when life gets long. It's like if you're an Alabama fan, and they're showing that video again of the goalpost heading to the Cumberland. "It's just a game." It's what happens at the license bureau. It's sitting in traffic on 440. It's a sermon with one too many illustrations. It's like that.

Eternal life goes on and on. But people want it.

The Church has been selling eternal life for years and years. Literally, there was a day when the Church sold "indulgences." So, if you had enough money to buy one, and secure your salvation in heaven, meanwhile, the church met its annual budget needs. Selling indulgences, or as I like to call the "good old days."

The reformation ruined the ability to make money from selling eternal life.

But that didn't stop some from selling a gospel of fear. There's a billboard, or two or two hundred and twenty-two, in Tennessee that will warn you what will happen to you if you don't secure your eternal salvation in Jesus Christ.

There's someone on the Pedestrian Bridge near the stadium this morning who will hand you a pamphlet. What must you do to inherit eternal life? Admit you're a sinner. Turn to God, accept Jesus, pray.

The man in Jesus' parable wished he had received that answer. Instead, he received, from the lips of the teacher, the social gospel. "Sell all you have and give the money to the poor."

Isn't that the worst answer ever? The great distribution of wealth. Lord knows that will never work. And the man in our story knew it. He went away sad because he had his hands full of many possessions and it wasn't the answer he was looking for.

Now, I know people who feel sorry for that man. But don't feel sorry that he's so downcast. For in this world, there are plenty of people, radio stations, and channels he can turn to that will tell him what he wants to hear. He'll find an answer that will turn that frown upside down.

The sad thing, really, is that here was a fellow who just walked up to God and called God "Teacher." The sad thing is here is a guy who asked God one question. If you could ask God one question, what would it be? He blew his question on himself. I want to live forever; what do I need to do? You need to let go! You need to think about other people.

Look! We all have our hands full in one way or another. You can have your handful with your job - always your job. You can have your hands full with your health. Your kids can occupy you day and night.

And that is what goes into the definition of eternal life. Because it is in the letting go that you discover that you're following Jesus Christ on the road to the eternal, to the cross. He's giving his life up because all he has to give is love.

Now, there are a few things that are eternal. One is light. The light never dies; even if that great ball of fire burns out, the light from it will bounce around the cosmos forever and ever and ever, amen. The light will always shine in the darkness. Light is truth.

Another thing that is eternal is love. You know this.

In 1977, Elvis Presley died. And if there's one thing that's eternal, it's Elvis Presley. I saw him downtown not long ago, but also that summer, my grandfather died. He's been dead for over 47 years, but I still have his love coursing through my heart. At 61 years old, I know what it's like to climb up onto his lap, smell his aftershave, and know his love. And I hope I have passed that love on to my children, but I hope in some way, I hope I passed it on to you.

This love is eternal... I suppose I have received some love in some form or fashion that was passed on to you. It's a love that looks like your father, mother, grandmother, and grandfather. It's a love that looks like great grands; it's a love that, without a shadow of a doubt, looks exactly like the one who gave it all away. Emptied his life.... in love... That one...Jesus Christ, God's son, our Lord.

'Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life? You know the commandments: "You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honor your father and mother.

'I have kept all these since my youth.' And Jesus, looking at him, loved him...

When we have our hands full, it's hard to let go.

I want us to pause for a moment and see in our mind's eye the face of Jesus. Have you got it? I mean, if you got dressed up for church and haven't encountered Jesus, what's the point? Have you got the face of Jesus?

Now I want you to see the face of Jesus loving you. That face is the same face as your best friend.

That face is the same face as the one who helped you when you were down and out.

That face is the same one who will hold you when you're afraid.

That face is the same one when you were a little kid and skinned your knee... that face... picked you up and kissed that knee... with that special kiss.

That face is the one who bailed you out of a problem.

That face is the one who said, "It's all right, I forgive you." You're off the hook. Have you got that face looking lovingly at you? Can you see Jesus looking lovingly at you? Can you see God looking lovingly at you? When you find someone who loves you, it changes everything.

You have your hands full. You have your heart full. You have your life full of love.

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