

HAZARDOUS CONDITIONS

mark 10

Our text this morning is Mark chapter 10. Follow along as I read it aloud.

Mark 10.1-52 - Then He arose from there and came to the region of Judea by the other side of the Jordan. And multitudes gathered to Him again, and as He was accustomed, He taught them again.

The Pharisees came and asked Him, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" testing Him. And He answered and said to them, "What did Moses command you?"

They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce, and to dismiss her." And Jesus answered and said to them, "Because of the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of the creation, God 'made them male and female.' 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."

In the house His disciples also asked Him again about the same matter. So He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."

Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it." And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them.

Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"

So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Do not defraud,' 'Honor your father and your mother.' "

And he answered and said to Him, "Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth." Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me."

But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!" And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, "Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God! 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."

And they were greatly astonished, saying among themselves, "Who then can be saved?" But Jesus looked at them and said, "With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible."

Then Peter began to say to Him, "See, we have left all and followed You."

So Jesus answered and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first."

Now they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was going before them; and they were amazed. And as they followed they were afraid. Then He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them the things that would happen to Him: "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles; and they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again."

Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him, saying, "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask."

And He said to them, "What do you want Me to do for you?"

They said to Him, "Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory."

But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"

They said to Him, "We are able."

Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and with the baptism I am baptized with you will be baptized; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared."

And when the ten heard it, they began to be greatly displeased with James and John. But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Now they came to Jericho. As He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the road begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Then many warned him to be quiet; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called.

Then they called the blind man, saying to him, "Be of good cheer. Rise, He is calling you." And throwing aside his garment, he rose and came to Jesus.

So Jesus answered and said to him, "What do you want Me to do for you?"

The blind man said to Him, "Rabboni, that I may receive my sight."

Then Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well." And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the road.

If we look at this chapter thematically, like we've been doing throughout this book, what we find is that this is a collection of people coming to Jesus and presenting themselves to Him with certain conditions attached to their discipleship. In each scenario, other than the final story of Blind Bartimaeus being healed, the people demonstrate a *conditional* faith or a *conditional* discipleship and expect the Lord to be happy about that.

But each time Jesus has some gut-busting and very candid teaching for them and for us. Because what we are called to as Christians is a complete, total surrender of the whole of our lives to Jesus Christ. ***That's the deal.*** But it is our nature to seek to *withhold* things from the Lord and from His command over our lives. God, in His grace, will allow us to hold things back. But the consequences of a conditional faith are quite severe. In fact, we just read how Jesus described conditional discipleship and it wasn't pretty. In fact, it was scary. So much so that at one point the disciples throw up their hands and say, "Who then can be saved?!?" To which Jesus explained that God has this life figured out, and if we're *willing* to surrender our lives and lay ourselves on His altar, then He will accomplish what seems impossible to us.

This is what this whole chapter is about. Assessing our obedience to the calling of Christ. Because if we're not willing to truly crucify self then we're not going to be able to be an active part of God's Kingdom. Jesus said in verse 15 that the route into the Kingdom is child-like faith, and, in context here, childlike *obedience*.

Obviously kids don't always obey, but as I was thinking about this I think I started to get some of what the Lord is talking about. I think of my son at home. Tiny little guy. He loves to cruise around the house right now. He chases the cat. He climbs up on the couches. He does all the stuff toddlers do. But what's so fun is that I can say to him, "Hey buddy, let's go into your room" and he looks at me for a minute, then starts toddling over to me. Or when we have the back door open, he goes up to the threshold of the door and we say, "Don't go outside buddy." And so, he stands there, looking out, just planted there on the edge. He doesn't have a discussion with me about his obedience. He either chooses to obey without conversation, or he chooses to disobey, leading to unfortunate consequences.

Now, again, my little Geno doesn't always obey, but that's the example Jesus gave to us for the kind of obedience God is looking for. Listening and moving without question.

But then, we come along, all grewed up, and say, "Lord, I know You're God. I'm locked into following You, but I'm not really in love with my wife right now. So, I'm going to get out of that relationship and it's really not a big deal. I know what You've called me to in marriage, I know the vows I made to my wife and to You, but I'm not willing to lay that part of my life down on the cross right now. I'm pulling the ripcord." That's the first section we read.

Or, "Lord, I'm totally committed to following You, I know You're God, but I'm not going to follow Your plain command to give to Your Kingdom of my finances regularly and joyfully and *sacrificially*. I'm not going to do it and You don't need to worry about it." The rich young ruler. And, believe me guys, we here are wealthy people. That should scare us a little.

Or, "Lord, I'm happy to have faith in You as long as I have safety and comfort and security." The text there says that the disciples were afraid as they walked toward Jerusalem and Jesus told them about the coming crucifixion and suffering that He would endure.

Or, “Lord, I’m Your disciple. I’ll follow You and live this Christian life, but I’m going to need a certain amount of status along with it. I need a certain amount of recognition and praise. And, if I don’t get it, then I’m going to take my ball and go home. I’ll still be Your disciple, but I’m not going to be involved in anything You’re doing unless I get to have human recognition.”

Guys, this is our heart! These are the things we say to God. This is God’s word revealing to us who we are. And Jesus explains here that these attitudes are the *opposite* of what a Christian is. They’re the *opposite* of discipleship.

“Lord, I’m happy to be a servant, as long as I’m the **FIRST** servant. The most important one. The one that gets to delegate things I don’t want to do. The one that gets to keep this little personal business on the side without being bothered by Your will or Your commands.” That’s the attitude that lives down in our hearts and quietly seeks to accumulate more territory in our lives.

If we don’t take care of these things, these lusts for power or prestige or wealth or a different spouse or status above other people, then we’re useless to God’s Kingdom. We become people who are in the category of what God *permits* rather than what God *desires*. God *permits* a lot of things. He gives us a will to choose. What God desires is that a disciple, number 1, actually, *actively* follows. Number 2, follows *obediently* wherever the Lord might direct and number 3 is ready to crucify self.

Now, sometimes these attitudes and these conditions we put on our Christianity come in disguised as needs or struggles we’re facing. “Lord I want to follow You the way I should, but my marriage is falling apart,” or, “I need more money to get out of this trouble,” or, “I just wish someone would recognize my service.” And we convince ourselves that we’re victims of these problems.

The heart is deceptive. It tries to convince us that these sorts of things are keeping us from really being able to move forward on the disciple road.

And what Jesus says is simple: God can do anything. God makes all things possible. God can make a camel go through the eye of the needle and God can sustain your life if you sell all you have and give to the poor. The question is not how difficult are the circumstances surrounding your life right now, the question is what has God asked you to do? Where has He asked you to go?

On Sunday we were faced with this text in 2 Samuel that talked about reinstating the King in our lives. We talked about revival and how that word is specifically for God’s people. People who have had the Lord reigning over their lives but who had dethroned the King in favor of some other pursuit or focus. And we were invited to each take stock of how ‘*vived*’ we are right now in our faith.

And here in this text we’re given these examples because all of these attitudes lurk around in every one of our hearts. God’s not trying to rebuke us, He’s trying to warn us. Because when we get caught up in this kind of conditional discipleship we lose opportunities and dividends that God wants for us. And we want what God wants.

The best way from this text to evaluate our need for revival is to answer the question that Jesus posed 2 times in these verses: “What do you want Me to do for you?” He said it to the sons of thunder and He said it to blind Bartimaeus.

When He asked James and John they asked for power and preeminence. They asked for personal greatness and status above others. To which Jesus had to stop and huddle up and explain that, “Yeah guys, you have this completely wrong. When you act like that you’re acting the **opposite** of Me.”

But when He asked blind Bartimaeus, he said, “Lord, I want to see.”

I think it’s interesting that already once before in the Gospel of Mark we’ve seen a chapter where the disciples weren’t getting it and interjected there was a story of a Jesus healing a blind man. Back in Mark 8.

And devotionally speaking, what we want is for the Lord to give us vision. Like Bartimaeus. No strings attached. No conditions. In fact, Bartimaeus threw off his cloak to get to Jesus that much faster. What’s important is that Jesus gives us vision. Because we want to see God be glorified in our lives. We want to see those opportunities He brings to us to minister and to share the Gospel. We want to see people as He does, with love and value, whether they’re lepers or children or tax collectors or fishermen. We want to see Him present in our lives. But He’s got to change our hearts and open up our eyes. He’s got to transform our desires and fill us up with Himself. The good news is, He’s ready to do that.

If we look within and allow God’s word to ask us this same question, “What do you want Jesus to do for you?” If the answer *isn’t* “Lord, I want to see. I want to see You sitting on the throne of my life.” Then there’s a problem. The answer to that question will reveal what kind of conditions we’ve brought into our discipleship.

“Lord, I want to follow You as long as I get my recognition.”

“Lord, I want to follow You as long as I get to keep all my money.”

“Lord, I want to follow You as long as I feel good doing it.”

“Lord, I want to follow You as long as it costs me nothing.”

Discipleship costs something. In fact, it costs everything.

Mark 8.34b-35 - “Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it.”

The Lord is ready to revive us. But are we ready to be revived?