

- Some of the material below draws on a talk I gave at Abertay CU in 2008 on the parallel Mark passage (10:17-45), "[Can Jesus make us truly free?](#)" Abertay CU, 20/11/2008

## Chat with the Children: Asking the right question

- Three "wrong questions"
  - price of a gift...
  - diesel or petrol in an electric car...
  - how to drive to a place with no roads...
- Sometimes we ask the wrong questions, and so get an answer that doesn't make immediate sense:
  - that's what happened to a rich young man who spoke to Jesus in the passage we'll be looking at today
  - he asked, "[what good thing must I do to get eternal life](#)"?
  - but as we'll see, that was the wrong question!
- [Lord, help us to ask the right questions...](#)

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## A man comes to Jesus...

- [slide, young man, "what must I do?"](#)
- Why does he come? What is he interested in?
  - because he is not free, because he lacks salvation, [he fears he will not inherit eternal life](#)
  - though to his society he is in a great position - male, rich - both signs of God's blessing and favour and good standing!
  - he may not be asking the right question, but he is aware that there is a question to be asked...

## What is good?

- [slide, "Good!"](#)
- Jesus responds to his question, beginning to try and help him see that relationship with God is about more than good deeds:
  - there is something here about Jesus' identity: "[why are you asking me? Are you recognising in me someone with authority to speak from God?](#)" - [there is only one who is good...](#)
  - and there is something here about the nature of doing good - something that is unachievable by any except God
  - he's asked the wrong question; doing good won't cut it, since only God is good enough...
- Jesus is beginning to challenge this man and what he places his trust in

## What are the commandments for?

- [slide, "Command"](#)
- Jesus turns the man's attention towards the commandments
  - really the whole Old Testament law, but specifically the 10 commandments as a summary of the whole...
  - Jesus is saying more than merely "[you learned about these as a child](#)"
  - his comments about the commandments flow directly from his statement that no-one is good!
  - in other words, he is initiating a challenge to what the man believes the commandments achieve
- [Jesus point is that the man should have realised, knowing the commandments, that no one is good!](#)
  - but unfortunately that wasn't true!
  - hence [v.20](#): "all these I have kept..."

- has he **really** never lied? Has he **really** never taken something that wasn't his own? Has he **really** never wanted someone dead?
- has he **really** never realised that the commands aren't a fence for us to jump over, but a notice pointing out how far short of God's standards we come?
- And so Jesus presses him:
  - picking on the issue of his wealth
  - we don't know the full background here...
  - maybe his identity is threatened, so tied up with being wealthy
  - maybe his greed is challenged, so liking a life of luxury
  - maybe his control is threatened, being able to be in charge of his own life and destiny
- Ultimately Jesus is pushing him to realise he cannot do enough to win God's favour:
  - he simply needs to come and follow Jesus (v.21)

## He went away sad

- *slide, he went away sad...*
- But, at least at this point, this was a step too far:
  - who knows, maybe he came back to Jesus later...

## How hard for the rich to enter...

- *slide, money in pocket...*
- Jesus takes the opportunity to teach his disciples something of the same lesson:
  - you can't buy your way into God's kingdom!
  - challenging cultural norms as he does so
  - you can't be good enough, rich enough, nice enough, clever enough, successful enough, kind enough....
- And the incidents that follow:
  - the parable in 20:1-16
  - context in the immediate run-up to confrontation and likely death in Jerusalem (20:17-19)
  - and James and John's request for glory and position (20:20-28)
- *...all are used by Jesus to point towards how entry into the kingdom is achieved:*

## He gives his life a ransom...

- *slide, Son of man came to give his life...*
- Through the cross
  - through Jesus sacrificial death, his life a ransom...

## Choices, choices...

- *slide, choice*
- Jesus left the man with a choice
  - and whether we already consider ourselves Christians or not leaves us with a choice too...
  - will we accept that we can contribute nothing to our entry into God's kingdom, to our inheritance rights for eternal life?
  - (hard - sticks in the throat...)
  - this is the **only** entry point to Christian faith
  - and this is the only confidence we can have to continue to live as Christians (danger of slipping into relying on being a "good" Christian, relying on adhering to certain patterns of behaviour)
- If Jesus was to say to you, "One thing you lack...", what issue would he identify as holding you back from following him fully?