

Mark 10:17-31; Hebrews 4:12-16

The Hebrews reading describes the scriptures as sharper than any two edged sword, able to divide between joint and marrow, able to expose the motives of the heart. Before God we cannot hide, we are laid bare.

And then we hear the story of the rich young ruler. This sparky young Jew was keen, and he wanted to be sure he would have eternal life. So he comes to the teacher to check he's doing ok. Jesus tells him to remember what he was taught in Sabbath school. The guy does a mental check...as Jesus runs through the list:

- no murder
- no adultery
- no stealing
- no false witness
- no cheating others
- honouring your father and mother

He claims to have perfectly kept these six commandments. Jesus doesn't challenge him on that so we presume he actually has done a pretty good job. Maybe we could tick them off as well. Jesus loves his faithfulness.

But there's 10 Commandments. Which ones does Jesus fail to mention?

- honour the sabbath, ok but Mark's Gospel is written to non-Jews, so maybe that's why THAT command was left out

What about the other three?

- no gods before Yahweh
- no carved images of God
- don't use God's name in a dishonourable way

Interesting...Now listen to what Jesus says to the young man...

'Go, sell what you own, give the money to the poor, and come follow me.'

The young man came seeking spiritual direction, and he got what he was looking for. Ouch, that double edged sword cut right between the marrow and bone and exposed the where his treasure was. His treasure was not in heaven, he had laid up his treasure on earth.

Jesus prescribes a cure for what the man is lacking. It's about the other three commandments. For all his effort he has struck out on commandments 1, 2 and 3.

We know Jesus has hit the nail on the head because of the man's reaction - he was sad. He knew Jesus was right. He needs to adjust the picture and get things in their proper place.

It looked like this religious man honoured Yahweh, but his obedience to 6 commandments was a cover. He was not honouring God above all, he was honouring himself. Fail on commandment #1. Furthermore, he has images of his real god all around him - his wealth. Fail for commandment #2: don't worship false gods. And by using God's name to as a badge of belonging, while worshipping other gods and failing to be in relationship the the one on his badge made his faith a sham. That commits the crime of false pretences, thus breaking #3.

In this man's life riches are on the throne. Selling up will fix this problem.

Giving it away will free him and put his resources to good work. Jesus does not send the man away empty handed, he sends him away with a challenge. We don't know if he took it up or not. Perhaps he did. He is given an opportunity to keep maturing in his faith. And I suspect even though this is a massive shock to him, if he is earnestly seeking God, he will step out. Like others around Jesus did.

The disciples are stunned - WOW this is a hard word. Who can be saved if this faithful Jew has to take such strong action to please God???? Good question.

Jesus answers - no one can do it. It's impossible for humans to follow God faithfully. BUT. With God nothing is impossible.

The disciples are feeling the pinch here, they have also experienced how costly it is to follow Jesus. We've left **everything** to follow you too.

Yes. But don't worry. Your Father knows what you need. Your needs will be met. Fathers, brothers, sisters, homes etc etc. Seek first my righteousness and all these things will follow. Put it in the right order and then....

Follow me.

The message for the young ruler is actually the same message to the disciples. Leave your nets and come, follow me. I will teach you to fish for men...

And it's the same message to us. Leave your own plans aside. Seek me first. Then come. Follow me. This way...

Hebrews reminds us that we are safe in Jesus' company.

'Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. He is able to sympathise with our weaknesses, and he has been tested in every respect as we are, yet was without sin. [That is he kept all 10 commandments and did everything else pleasing to God as well]

Because of his work saving us and bringing us into God's family, we can come into God's throne room with confidence - boldness - and find help in our time of need.'

In our own strength we fail the tests before us, left alone we would never complete the journey. But with God all things are possible. We follow Jesus, we have provision from our Father and we are filled and accompanied by his Spirit.

We will make it. So when we hear Jesus call us to follow him, we can get up and walk and follow. Even if it means selling up and giving it all away.

May we have the courage to take his hand and walk in his footsteps.

Amen.

Summary

Hebrews describes the scriptures as sharper than any two edged sword, able to divide between joint and marrow and expose the motives of the heart. And then we have the story of a sparky young Jew keen to keep God's law. This guy wants to make it into heaven and claims to have perfectly kept all the commandments Jesus gives him. But Jesus didn't mention a few of 10 commandments...which ones? Honour the sabbath/no gods before Yahweh/no carved images and don't use God's name dishonourably. Interesting.

Then Jesus prescribes a cure for what the man is lacking in his spirituality. For all his effort he has struck out on commandments 1, 2 and 3. We know Jesus has hit the nail on the head because of the man's reaction. He knew Jesus was right. Although the 6 commandments were faithfully kept, He was not honouring God above all, he was honouring himself. Fail on commandment #1. Furthermore, he has images of his real god all around him - his wealth. Fail for commandment #2: don't worship false gods. It appeared like the guy honoured Yahweh, but obeying 6 commandments was a cover for failing to consider #1. That means commandment 3 was broken - he was using God's name to as a badge of belonging, but his faith was a sham.

Sell what you have and give it to the poor. This will free him and put his resources to good work. Jesus does not send the man away with a challenge, an opportunity to keep maturing in his faith. The disciples are stunned. Who can be saved if this faithful Jew has to take such strong action to please God???? No one can do it. It's impossible for humans to follow God faithfully. BUT. With God nothing is impossible. Seek first my righteousness, put things in the right order and then....Follow me.

The message for the young ruler is the same message to the disciples. Leave your nets and come, follow me. And it's the same message to us. Leave your own plans aside. Seek me first. Then come. Follow me. This way....