

AIM

- To show that we can never do enough to inherit eternal life
- To explain God grace – his undeserved gift to us
- To look at the implications of this for how group members respond to God

EXPLORE

- Ask for any questions over last week's follow-up reading (Mark 11:1-13:37) and questions:
 1. *What is the crowd's attitude towards Jesus as He arrives in Jerusalem?*
 - They are respectful, joyful, and hopeful—some spread their cloaks on the road, others spread branches. They welcome Jesus with shouts of praise. “Hosanna” is a Hebrew word meaning “Save us!”
 2. *The Old Testament prophet Zechariah wrote about a time when someone would ride into Jerusalem (also called Zion) on a colt (Zechariah 19:9). What would the crowd understand about Jesus when He arrived in that way?*
 - Zechariah prophesied about a time when Israel's King would arrive in Jerusalem (Zion). The King was righteous and had the ability to save His people. He wouldn't arrive on a war-horse, but on a colt, the foal of a donkey. So this event in Mark 11 signaled that Jesus was that King (His identity) and had come to save (His mission).
 3. *How do the religious leaders respond to Jesus in Mark 11:18 and 12:12?*
 - They fear Him because of His popularity with the crowd (Mark 11:18).
 - They look for an opportunity to arrest Jesus because they know His parable is about them and their plan to kill Him (12:1-11).
 4. *How do these leaders treat Jesus as a result of their fear of Him (Mark 11:27-33; 12:13-17)?*
 - They question Jesus' authority.
 - They are two-faced: they flatter Him, but seek to trap Him with trick questions.
 5. *The Sadducees were a group of religious leaders who did not believe in resurrection. In Mark 12:18-23 they tried to make Jesus look foolish with their question about the resurrection. What did Jesus say was the real reason for their disbelief (Mark 12:24)?*
 - Jesus said they did not know either the Scriptures (the Old Testament) or the power of God.
 6. *What other criticism does Jesus make of religious leaders (Mark 12:38-40)?*
 - He talks about their pride and conceit and their hypocrisy—their concern only with appearance and reputation. They care about themselves, instead of caring for widows.

7. *A few days later the mood of the crowd had turned. Led by their religious leaders they demanded the death of Jesus (Mark 15:9-13). Does it surprise you that it is possible to be respected, even religious, and still reject Jesus? Why or why not?*

- There is a difference between being religious (i.e., living a “good” life, keeping religious rules, attending church, etc.) and believing in and following Jesus.
- Have a leader read Mark 10:13-16.
 - *From all we have seen of Jesus, why do you think people would bring their children to Him (Mark 10:13, 16)?* They brought their children to Jesus in the hope that He would touch them (v. 13) and bless them (v. 16).
 - *We are not told why the disciples rebuked those who brought their children to Jesus. What might have been the reason for their intolerance (Mark 9:33-34)?* (1) The disciples had been arguing about their own greatness. Meeting the needs of children may have been low on their priorities. (2) They may have believed that Jesus was too important, busy, or tired to be disturbed by “unimportant” children. Though children may have been loved by their families, they had little status in first-century Israel society.
 - *Read Mark 9:33-37. In Mark 10:14 we are told that Jesus was indignant with the disciples. Are you surprised that He reacted so strongly? Why or why not?* Some may be surprised that Jesus is capable of being unashamedly indignant—but it is consistent with His love of what is good, and His appropriate anger at what is wrong. It’s not surprising that Jesus was exasperated with the disciples, since He had already given them training on welcoming children in Mark 9:35-37.
 - *Read Mark 10:14-15. How do we know that Jesus is not just talking about actual children belonging to the kingdom of God?* In Mark 10:14 Jesus says that the kingdom of God (the place of God’s presence and blessing) belongs to *such* as these. In Mark 10:15 He speaks of anyone receiving the kingdom of God *like* a little child. Jesus is using the children as a picture of those who receive the gift of God’s kingdom.
 - *Read Mark 10:16. The little children did nothing to earn acceptance by Jesus. All they did was come to Him and He took them in His arms. What is the significance of this for our entry into God’s kingdom (Mark 10:15)?* Jesus says that those who will not receive God’s kingdom like little children will be unable to enter it. It is difficult for adults, who are used to having to earn acceptance with others, to simply come humbly, dependently, and empty-handed to Jesus. But that is the only way into God’s kingdom.

LISTEN (DVD)

- Mark 10:15 – “I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”
 - If God asked “Why should I give you eternal life?” what would you say?
 - The young, rich, powerful, and religious man in Mark 10:17-27 (see also Matthew 19:16-26; Luke 18:18-27) was a “good person”, who wanted to know how to be good enough for God (i.e., “inherit eternal life” or “enter the kingdom of God” or “have treasure in heaven” or “be saved” = the overwhelming joy of being forgiven and accepted by God Himself, free to enjoy Him forever in this life and the life to come).
 - Reality check #1: “How good is good enough for God?” → The only One who really is good is God (i.e., perfectly just, perfectly wise, perfectly pure, perfectly loving; compare yourself only with Him.
 - Reality check #2: “But, I’ve kept all your commands since I was a child.” → Really? How about the “most important command,” according to Jesus, to “love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength” (Mark 12:28-31)? Money was more important to

him than God — so, he really wasn't good and he was really far from God.

- We can never do enough to inherit eternal life. Why? Because nothing we do can change the fact that, deep down, all of us have a serious heart problem that separates us from God (Mark 7:20-23). Nothing we do can cure our heart problem. Our good deeds are simply like Band-Aids—they cannot solve the deeper problem, but only cover it up.
- Any answer that begins, “God, you should give me eternal life, because I...” or any answer that places confidence in anything you are or anything you have done will not be of any use. According to Jesus, these things will do you no good at all when it comes to inheriting eternal life. It's not that these are bad things to do; they are very good things to do. But, they become bad if we're trusting in them to earn eternal life for us—if we're using them to try to justify ourselves in God's eyes. This obviously leaves man in a desperate situation.
- See, “with man this is impossible”—in other words, there are some things we will never deserve, can never earn, and should never even try to pay for. But, that doesn't mean that we can't receive it as a gift from God—as Jesus says here, “But not with God, for with Him all things are possible.”
- Those who are the very opposite of this young, rich, powerful, and religious man—that is, little children—picture for us how we can indeed inherit eternal life (Mark 10:13-16). Jesus is not talking about the naivety/gullibility or “innocence”/“purity” of children; He's emphasizing their total dependency. They receive all that their parents provide for them as a gift—they have no way of paying.
- Now, all this makes the message of Jesus very different from other religions. Other faiths say if you do certain things and don't do other things, then God will accept you. But Jesus tells us that that is simply not true, because the program of the human heart is so serious that the only way we can ever hope to be accepted by God is if He reaches out to us, pays the price for our sin Himself, and then offers us forgiveness as a gift. And that is exactly what happened when He sent Jesus to die on the cross in our place.
- We must receive eternal life (i.e., the overwhelming joy of being forgiven and accepted by God Himself, welcomed into the intimacy of His own family, free to enjoy Him forever) like a child would receive it—with empty hands, content to accept as a free gift what God has done. This is grace: God's undeserved gift to us—a saving righteousness we don't deserve, cannot earn, and shouldn't try to pay for—paid for by the death of Jesus (see 2 Corinthians 5:21). It must simply be received.
- When our Creator God, who knows our heart inside out, shows us that He that would die for us, it changes everything. It shows that we are more sinful than we ever realized, but more loved than we ever dreamed. No longer do we need to pretend that we're something we're not. No longer do we need to look in all the typical places to find our sense of value—money or power, religiousness or career, good looks or the approval of others. We don't need to look there any more because we receive eternal and loving acceptance from God. The cross reminds us of the sobering seriousness of our sin and of the overwhelming magnitude of God's love for us.
- This is the gift your Creator is holding out to you now. “Come to Me with empty hands,” says Jesus. “There's something I want you to have.”

DISCUSS

- *Was there something in particular that stood out or stuck you from the DVD?*
- *“What must I do to inherit eternal life?” (Mark 10:17) How would you answer that question? There is nothing we*

can do, other than trust entirely in what Jesus has done (Mark 10:15).

- *“You are more sinful than you ever realized, but more loved than you ever dreamed.” How do you respond to this?* These are the two core aspects of the gospel—hopeless human sinfulness and God’s gracious love revealed in Jesus.
- *Has grace made a difference to the view of God you had in Session 1?* God’s character has two sides—He is both just and merciful. God’s justice means that He will not leave sin unpunished. God’s mercy means that He does not treat us as we deserve, but instead He lovingly sent His Son, Jesus, to save us from our sin. Some people view God as just a strict disciplinarian who makes rules for us to follow. Others see Him as automatically “welcoming everyone into heaven,” except for “really bad” people. An understanding of grace helps provide us with a fuller and more biblical view of God’s character.

FOLLOW-UP

Sometime during this next week, I encourage you to read through Mark 14:1-16:8 and answer the 6 questions that are in your notes.