Only God Can Do This

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 05 November 2023

Preacher: Dr. Michael Staton

[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang.! Thank you for joining us. Ladies, I'm going to the theology is one of my very favorite things that I get to do.

And if you're for the gentleman here, if you would pray for me for Tuesday, ladies can too as well. But it is such an amazing night together when we gather every couple of months to do this.
It is probably the most pressure I feel of anything that I do. Because you've got 500 ladies who many of them traveled a long distance and they've left, you know, home for the evening.
And they all kind of look at me every time like, you better make this worth it. And I feel that. And so, you can pray for Tuesday night. Thursday, we leave.
I think this is our eighth annual Christmas in Branson trip that Mars and I have led with our 50 and over. When we started this eight years ago, I had this idea.
[1:09] We just wanted to spend time with our 50 and over group and get to know them and spend time with them and laugh with them. And, you know, that group being so much older than me, I wanted just to have a way to connect with them.

I now am able to go on my own trip. So, for years, this 50 and over trip was something me and Marcy were doing for, you know, the next generation. We are now—we, I am now in that generation.
So, I'm going on my own trip as a participant Thursday. We're looking forward to that time and always just a thrill for us to get to spend those three days.
We'll be leaving Thursday and back Sunday evening. Tonight, while we gather in here for evening service, we'll finish the book of Lamentations that we've been studying through this semester.
Our Passion Youth Choir, about 115 or so of our teenagers in our youth choir, will be going to minister and serve tonight at Hope is Alive.
[2:10] And so, you'll want to be, as the Lord brings that to your mind, praying for them and while we're gathering here for worship. So, we've got a full day of ministry and a full week of ministry coming up. These are—these are really, really good days.

I'm so thankful for all the Lord is doing among us. Turn with me, if you would, again, to Mark chapter 10. For those who may be new with us, our church is walking through the Gospel of Mark.
Our general pattern here is to just walk verse by verse, word by word, through whole books of the Bible. That's how the Lord revealed His Word to us.
And so, our best effort to preach the full counsel of God's Word, our best effort to study God's Word in context, and to not miss any part of it, is just to walk verse by verse.
And so, we bring ourselves today to Mark chapter 10 in verse 23. We live in an age that you may have heard this term before.
[3:13] It's an age of what we would call easy believism. An age where the truth of the Gospel, even among churches, has been so watered down that it's really been this effort for the last number of decades, sadly, just to get as many people into your church as possible, and get as many people as possible to say they've made some kind of a decision.

And the elements of the Gospel are rarely mentioned in full. Easy believism would just be, do whatever you can to get someone to say a prayer, or to walk down an aisle, or to raise their hand, just have some kind of response to the Gospel, however it's presented.
And what usually accompanies that kind of mentality is very little talk of sin, very little talk of repentance, no discussion of dying to yourself.
But the reality of it is, without understanding judgment, and sin, and hell, what is someone being saved from?

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

And so often, unfortunately, in our culture, this idea of being honest and forthright about the fullness of the Gospel is often withheld.
[4:41] So, on the one hand, when we think of salvation biblically, not culturally, but biblically, on the one hand, salvation is very simple.

It's not about your works. It's not about your achievements. It's not about what you can accomplish. It's simple. It's instantaneous. The moment you believe with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are saved.
On the one hand, salvation is very simple. But biblically, on the other hand, salvation is hard. In fact, not just hard.
The New Testament would say it's impossible. Impossible in the sense that you cannot save yourself. You can't do this.
You can't fix this. You can't correct this. You can't earn this. And when rightly understood from a biblical perspective, salvation isn't even something that a person wants.
[5:52] Not apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. Now, that's not my words. That's the very testimony of the New Testament. Romans 3, verse 11 says, there is no one who seeks God.

It's a pretty staggering reality. Now, let's be clear. Man on his own will seek the things only God provides.
Everybody wants peace. Everybody wants safety. Everybody wants a sense of wholeness. Everybody wants a sense of joy. But to say, I want to glorify Christ.
I want to magnify Jesus. I want to die to myself and live for the glory of His name. That's not something that man, on his own, in his unredeemed state, apart from the work of the Spirit, would ever even want.
Which is why the text says, there's no one who seeks God. On the one hand, salvation is simple. But on the other hand, salvation is very hard, even impossible.
[7:03] Impossible for us to do on our own. When we speak of a true, legitimate, biblical conversion, we are talking about something no less than a miracle.

It's God doing what only God can do that man left to himself would never do. We just last week studied this encounter with what we know as the rich young ruler.
This man had everything the world desires. He's rich. He's young. He's powerful. All the things the world craves. Jesus, knowing his heart, rightly identifies that this man, though a culturally good man, and a respected man, and a benevolent, nice man, Jesus understood this man had an idol. His idol was his stuff. And Jesus called on this rich young ruler to smash his idol, to get rid of his idolatry of materialism.
And this man, because he had so much stuff, could not, would not do it, and he walked away from Jesus. And it says he was disheartened by what Jesus said to him, and he walked away sad.
[8:23] And that brings us to verse 23. And in verses 23 to 31, I want us to look at this with four headings that unfold here in the passage.

Let me just read it to get it in front of us. It says, And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God.
And the disciples were amazed at his words, but Jesus said to them again, Children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.
And they were exceedingly astonished and said to him, Then, who can be saved? And Jesus looked at them and said, With man, it is in the name of God.
It is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God. Make note of four things this morning.
[9:34] First, an impossibility. And the impossibility, we can summarize it this way. You can't.

You can't. You can't. You can't. You can't what? Well, you can't save yourself. Again, back to verse 23.
Jesus looked around. So, he's just finished this conversation with a rich young ruler that we studied last week. And Jesus looked around. There's other people listening, other people watching this conversation.
And Jesus says, How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God. Now, why is that? Well, he says that because the rich young ruler has just walked away rejecting Christ because the man loved his wealth more than anything else.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

on the heels of that reality, Jesus says how hard it is for the wealth that enter the kingdom because they are prone to a sense of self-security.
[10:40] Those who are wealthy tend often to lack a sense of desperation. They lack the awareness of their own need because they're so accustomed to having everything they want.

The wealthy often long for life on this earth, not the life to come because their hearts have settled for this world. Now, before you think, well, thank goodness I'm not wealthy, so I'm off the hook, just understand that your standard of living would be considered exceedingly wealthy in just almost every culture throughout any era in human history.
You can't let yourself off the hook here just because you think of people who you know who have more than you do. I mean, you have three meals a day.
Most in our congregation have multiple vehicles. You have running water. We should take these words very seriously.
And this is shocking to the disciples because in Jesus' day, not that unlike the false teaching of our day, the idea was, the assumption was that if you had wealth, it was simply God's favor and approval upon you.
[12:04] So, for those who were wealthy, they were trusting in their stuff, loving their stuff, all the while assuming that their wealth came because God had blessed them.

And now you get a sense of what the New Testament calls someone who was twice lost, twice the sons of hell, as the gospel say, because someone is lost, they're unconverted, and they think they're fine.
And Jesus says, for people who think they're fine in their unconverted state, for people who have the idol of materialism yet assume God is pleased with them, they are in real danger.
And what Jesus says is so shocking because everybody would assume if anyone was good, it was the rich young ruler. And the rich young ruler just walked away from Jesus.
And now Jesus, right on top of that, says those who are wealthy, they have a very difficult time making it to heaven because they tend to trust in their wealth, they tend to love their stuff, they tend to let their heart settle for the things of the world, and they don't want any talk about the life that is to come.
[13:20] Verse 26 says, the apostles were exceedingly astonished. This is a shocking thing, Jesus says. Verse 25, he says, it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.

Now there's all kinds of, of kind of strange things you can read about when people talk about that verse and what's in mind. Look, this is a really simple thing. The camel was the largest animal in that part of the world they knew anything about, and the point Jesus is making is exactly what it sounds like it is.
How are you going to take a giant camel and pass it through the eye of a needle? And the answer is, you can't. It's an impossibility. And that's the exact point Jesus is making here with the listeners. It's an impossibility that you can't save yourself. Salvation on one sense is simple, but on the other hand, it's impossible.
On your own, left to yourself, you can't do this. It's not just hard to save yourself, it's impossible to save yourself.
[14:35] So that's the first thing that we see is an impossibility, and the impossibility is you can't, you cannot save yourself. That leads secondly to a question.

from an impossibility to a question, and the question is, who can? Who can enter heaven?
Who can be saved? Look at verse 26. They were exceedingly astonished, and they said to him, then, who can be saved?
When Jesus made it clear that your stuff can't save you, your status can't save you, your own personal strength can't save you, your own religion left to itself can't save you, and there's nothing of this world you can do to save you, it's impossible, it led to the question, well, if that's the case, who can?
Who will make it? Who can be saved? I mean, if a nice, respectable, successful man like the rich young ruler can't make it, who can?
[15:46] The disciples ask a great question here. I mean, in fairness, the rich young ruler did too. The rich young ruler came to Jesus and said, what do I need to do to inherit eternal life?

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

At least he's asking good questions to the right person. The problem with the rich young ruler is he had an idol he would not repent of. Now, the disciples ask also a good question, who can be saved? And the reason they ask this question is because they've just seen the very respected, influential man who walked away without salvation, and Jesus has just said, all those who are wealthy are in great trouble because they tend to be self-reliant, and the thought of the day was, but if you're wealthy, doesn't that mean God approves of you?
And the answer is no. That's not having anything to do with it, and the disciples are astonished. They're amazed, and they say, well then, who can? They look at who's not in, the rich young ruler, and say, well who can be?
The rich young ruler was brilliant and dedicated, and the best of his works could not save him. It would be a little bit like if you were taking a college course, and on the first day, your professor said to you that this is the hardest course you will ever take.
[17:27] This is the hardest course offered on this campus, and there is no one who is going to make an A in this class. And sitting next to you is the smartest person on campus.

It's the person with the highest GPA. It's the person who's about to graduate valedictorian. It's the person whose school comes very easy for them, and your professor looks at that person and says, even they can't make an A.
and then you say to yourself, if they can't make an A, who can? That's the mentality of the apostles here. If the rich young ruler, the synagogue leader, can't make it, and if all the people that we've assumed have God's approval on them because of their wealth, if that doesn't get them in, who can?
Which is really the greatest question we could consider this morning. Who goes to heaven? It's not the person who's just in church every Sunday.
That's not going to get you to heaven. It's not the person who's very nice and kind. That by itself isn't going to get you to heaven. It's not even a generous person.
[18:49] That by itself isn't going to get you to heaven. Who can? That leads us to a third thing and that's a guarantee.

And the guarantee is God can. God can. Look at verse 27. Jesus looked at them and said, with man it is impossible but not with God for all things are possible with God.
Now, for those who may be new to our church, here's a great example of why we want to study the Bible in context. And here's a great example of why our conviction is what we would call expository preaching where we're just walking sequentially through books of the Bible verse by verse, word by word, letting the point of the sermon be the point of the text.
Here's why. Most of us in this room, we may can't chapter and verse it, but most of us in this room would be familiar that the Bible says that all things are possible with God.
Now, God is sovereign and I affirm God can do anything He wants to consistent with His character. Of course. God is sovereign and I'm but this verse comes in a context.
[20:18] It's not just said in a vacuum. It's not just said out of nowhere. This verse is in a context. And the context is this discussion of how can a person be saved because the rich young ruler is not making it on his own and that guy has everything.

And if he can't make it, the apostles say, who can? And the answer of Jesus is, on your own, salvation is impossible.
You can't be good enough. You can't be religious enough. You can't be successful enough. You can't be nice enough. You can't be respected enough. You can't be influential enough.
On your own, salvation is impossible. But, not with God.
For all things are possible with God. The impossibility that Jesus is affirming is possible with God is you and salvation.
[21:29] That's what's impossible without God in context that only God can achieve. Salvation, if left to us, is simply impossible.

Period. Now, that goes against every fiber of our do-it-yourself mentality or every fiber of our what we can earn and what we can work and what we can achieve.
And even in most churches, we're okay if salvation's 90% God, only 10% us or 98% God, 2% us. We'll get the number small, but you gotta let me get some credit for heaven.
It's the way most people think. Jesus says, on your own, salvation's not just hard, it's impossible. And when the disciples say, well then who in the world can be saved?

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

Jesus' answer is, with you it's impossible, but with God all things are possible. people. Now here's why this promise is so helpful.
[22:36] John 1, but to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. Okay? So, God has given the right to believers.

Now listen to verse 13, it describes how you were converted. Who were born, speaking of your conversion, not of blood, not, it's not about your family, not about your lineage, not about your nationality, nor of the will of the flesh, it's not something you did in your work, it's not something you accomplished, nor of the will of man.
You, on your own, unconverted, apart from God, can't even will yourself to be saved, John 1, 13, but of God.
What Jesus says in Mark 10 is completely consistent with the teaching of John 1, that it's impossible for you to be saved unless God does it.
Romans 3, as it is written, there is no one righteous, not even one, there is no one who understands, there is no one who seeks God.
[23:56] If someone is seeking after God himself, it is because the work of God has already been done in their life. Only a converted person desires the Lord.

Unconverted people will desire what only salvation brings, but they will not desire Christ himself. We see some pictures of this in the physical realm, that gives us an image of it, an illustration of it. In Mark 3, Jesus tells a man with a withered hand, stretch out your hand. That's an impossible command. How is he going to do that?
His hand doesn't work. Well, it's impossible unless God makes it happen. We see it in the Gospel of John, at the tomb of Lazarus.
How much ability does Lazarus have to come forth? He's dead. But yet, Jesus says, Lazarus, come forth. How is a dead man going to come forth?
[25:02] He can only do this if God accomplishes what he has commanded. That's the point being made in Mark 10. You can't save yourself.

You say, but I'm as nice to people as I can be. That's great. But being nice doesn't cover your sin. You say, I come to church every Sunday.
That's great. But just attending church doesn't cover your sin. You say, but I'm generous and I give to people and I help people.
That's wonderful. But you can't purchase your way to heaven. And you say, well, who can then? Who makes it to heaven if it's not being nice and it's not being generous, it's not being religious? How can this even happen? And the answer is, it's impossible with you. But God can. God can.
[26:07] Acts 17, 30, he commands all people everywhere to repent. And salvation happens because the same voice that gave the command gives the grace to obey in faith.

Salvation is impossible unless the Lord does it. And that's the context of the promise that nothing will be impossible with God. God. Now, let me, let me deal with something, a practical outworking of this that I think is very important for our church.
And even before I say it, there's going to be some pushback to this. I know that. But listen to what I'm saying and why I'm saying this in context.
Some of you are not going to agree with this at first. When someone is saved, truly converted, our first response should not be, oh, Johnny, I'm so proud of you.
That should not be our first response. our first response should be, praise God who has saved your soul.
[27:43] You say, well, that's just semantics. No, it's not. It's doctrine. Was Johnny saved because Johnny was smart?

Or was Johnny a spiritually dead person that only the grace of God could call to life? And if you really want to know what people think about salvation, I mean, really think about it, you listen to the way they respond when someone tells them they've been saved.
If your grandchild picks up the phone and calls you and says, Grandpa, I got saved today. It's a wonderful thing.
It's a precious gift and a precious phone call. Please hear my heart on this. If you respond to that information the same way you would if they said, Grandpa, I got straight A's on my report card. Grandpa, I got MVP of the basketball tournament. If you respond to someone telling you they've been saved the same way you would if they told you they won a science fair award, you've missed

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

the Bible's teaching on salvation.
[29:24] If your grandkid says, I got straight A's, you say, great job. Way to go. You worked so hard. You earned that.

Grandpa, I got first place in my dance recital. Way to go, sweetie. You're so talented. You're so hardworking. Grandpa, I'm going to start at quarterback this Friday night.
Way to go. Look how much work you've put into that. Look at all you've done to sacrifice to earn that. And when I hear people talk about when someone gets saved, I'll just be honest with you, most of the time what I hear, I couldn't tell a difference from the response if Johnny got saved or if Johnny got straight A's.
you don't give praise to the dead man who was brought to life by the sovereign work of God.
You give glory to the God who saved his soul. God and when somebody gets baptized, I'm proud of every one of them because it takes some courage to stand in front of a size group this big and they write out their conversion, they write out the gospel and that can be intimidating and for a lot of people, children, teenagers, adults who get baptized, they're doing it because the Bible commands it and they're nervous about it.
[31:11] And I'm so proud of them walking in obedience and I'm so proud of parents who in their home have a framework of godliness and teach the gospel and pray the gospel and live the gospel and lead their children to hear the truth.

I'm so proud of the discipleship that happens in this church by teachers and leaders and people who desire to do it right. I'm so proud of people in this church who share the gospel and risk all kinds of things to tell people that Jesus saves.
But when it comes down to why do you believe, it is not because you got saved, straight A's, or first string, or first place. It is because you were dead and God in grace saved your soul.
That's why all the glory goes to God alone because on your own what happened in your salvation is impossible with you, but with God all things are possible.
This is why as a church, when we see people saved, it gives us all the more reason to be astounded by what God has done.
[32:36] We've seen a lot of salvations and baptisms this year to God's glory. Our church has a lot of reasons to be overwhelmed by the goodness of God.

God has done a promise. There's an impossibility you can't. There's a question who can. There's a guarantee God can.
And then fourth, there's a promise and that promise is God will. God will. What will he do?
Verse 28, Peter began to say to him, see, we have left everything and followed you. Now, you've got to remember the context here.
This is, I just want to go put my arm around Peter here because he's so stressed. Peter's saying, look, the rich young ruler, he had all this stuff and he wouldn't follow you because he wanted to keep his stuff.
[33:37] And then you mentioned all the people who are wealthy, that most of them love their stuff and they're not making it to heaven because they depend on their stuff. And Peter says to Jesus, remember the rich young man who walked away, Jesus, we're still here.

Remember, we walked away from our stuff. We're the ones who did what you asked us to do. And the reason this matters, Matthew tells us a little bit more than Mark does here.
Matthew 19, 27, same conversation. Peter said in reply, see, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?
Peter says, we walked away from our stuff. Are we okay? The rich young man went back to his stuff to secure his stuff, to enjoy his stuff.
And Peter says, we left our stuff. Are we going to have anything when this is all said and done? What's there going to be for us? Because we've tried to do what you called us to do.
[34:56] Here's the promise. God will. What will he do? Two things. One, he will sustain you in persecution. And two, he will give you eternal blessings.

Let's just watch this unfold. Verse 28. Peter began to say to him, see, we have left everything and followed you. And Jesus said, truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the gospel who will 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.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

Jesus says, Peter, it's true. The gospel may cost you everything. The gospel may cost you your money.
It may cost you your possessions. It may cost you your family. You may have to give up everything. But here's the promise.
I will sustain you in this life. And you will be blessed with eternal blessings in the life to come.
[36:34] Now remember the context. Context is always key. The apostles just watched the rich young ruler refuse to follow Jesus so that he could go back and have his stuff.

And the question is, are we going to lose if we walk away from our stuff?
And Jesus says, there's not a single believer following me who will not receive my blessing in this life and more importantly, in the life to come.
Jesus says, now it's true. Salvation may cost you houses and lands. That's true. And being known as a Christian may cause you to lose your freedom.
And there are real people that have lost their family over their decision to follow Jesus Christ. Jesus says to those listening, that when you are converted, you're not losing family, you're gaining your true spiritual family.
[38:08] family. The closest I can come to this in my life, or when my two sons got married, I didn't lose anything.

I didn't give up anything. I just gained family. I just gained two daughters by marriage.
I didn't lose anything. I gained. Jesus says, when you understand salvation, you may lose your house, you may lose your land, you may lose your job, you may lose your standing, you may lose relationships, but here's the truth.
What you gain is your true family. Some of you following Jesus costs more than others in this life. love. But you have in this congregation hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of brothers and sisters in Christ who love you and who care for you and who want to serve you and for all eternity you've got the blessing of salvation.
[40:03] Go back for just a minute to chapter 8. look at verse 34 as chapter 8 ends.

Calling the crowd to him with his disciples he said to them if anyone would come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me for whoever would save his life will lose it but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospels will save it for what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul for what can a man give in return for his soul that was the teaching and the example comes two chapters later in the rich young ruler who unwilling to give up what he could not keep anyway walked away from the only thing that could give him true salvation and the rich young ruler is just one example of an untold number of people who have done the same thing and so today
I call on you to consider do you love Christ more than everything here's the gospel it's impossible to save yourself you can't which brings the question who can and here's the guarantee God can God saves God restores God heals God brings from death to life and here's the promise God will he will sustain you in persecution he promised in Mark 10 and he will provide for you and bring you to glory if you're a believer you need to understand that you were dead and according to the book of Ephesians if you are in Christ it's because you were made alive and so all the glory goes only to God for your salvation and if your spouse is saved and your children are saved if your grandchildren are saved all the glory goes to God he is worthy of far more praise than we ever can comprehend the hymn writer got it right we are to be lost in wonder love and praise for all the Lord has done and if today you find yourself here and you're not a believer let me say clearly to you you can't save yourself but God still saves and my invitation to you this morning come straight from the
Bible do not do not walk away from the only one who can save do not hear the gospel presented today and walk away sad because you rejected Christ this day this moment I invite you to call upon the name of the Lord Jesus and simply say something like God I take you at your word that what I can't do you will do that what I'm unable to accomplish only you can do and I'm asking you I'm trusting in you to do what only you can do would you save my soul and as we have read this morning at the beginning of our service and as we have sung this morning all who believe in him will be saved and we'll have all eternity to bring glory to the only one deserving of it the
[45:26] Lord Jesus Christ would you this day call upon his name and if there's a way our church can help you we want to do that we would love to pray with you we would love to sit down with you we would love to open a Bible and walk you through how to follow through to know the Lord we'd like to help you know how to read your Bible we'd love to help you to understand how we can walk

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

in faith you use that connection card and allow us the privilege to respond to you and give you all the time you need to help you to understand understand through the word of God how to follow him every day and I pray the next time somebody tells you I've been saved I hope you'll rejoice more than you ever have

I hope you'll smile wider than you ever have and I hope you'll embrace that friend or that son or that granddaughter or that Sunday school class member and say only God could do this praise our God who can do the impossible Lord we thank you today for your word we give you praise for the glory of your son and the work he has done on the cross on our behalf I pray that as we leave today that we would have on our hearts and our minds the true blessing it is to belong to your family not something we earned something freely!
but that which was freely given cost the greatest price the death of your son thank you for sending Jesus to die thank you for raising him back to life thank you for opening our eyes to understand the beauty of it and thank you for your promise to never leave us or forsake us to be with us both in this life and to safely lead us to glory for all eternity indeed you are the only God who saves and we today give glory to your name amen let me remind you church we've got evening service at five o'clock tonight hope you'll come back we'll sing together and pray together we'll be finished in the book of lamentations invite you to come and worship with us
I love you so much church family so thankful for you

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host