

What Must I Do?, by Daniel H. Kuhn, Jr. 19061015
Mark 10:17-31, Luke 10:25-28
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Are you saved? You might ask, “What do you mean by ‘saved’?”

That is a complex issue, isn’t it? Salvation generally means to be delivered or set free from destruction or evil. The question could be rephrased, “Are you going to heaven when you die? Or, “Are you going to inherit eternal life?”

There are two common answers to the question, “Are you saved?” The first is, “I’m not sure.” The second is, “O yes. I was saved on June 1, 1969 when I confessed Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and savior.”

I would like to deal with both of those common answers. I would like to give some reassurance to those with the first answer, “I’m not sure,” and a challenge to those who are so sure because they can give the second answer, “I was saved at such and such an instant.”

My friend Charles Lamb tells the story of his conversation with an evangelistic (in the negative sense of that word) preacher (in the negative sense of that word!) The preacher answered his own rhetorical question, “Are you saved?” by saying, “You must confess Jesus Christ as Lord and savior.” Charles asked the preacher to take out his Bible and open it to Luke 10 and read beginning at verse 25.

²⁵Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he said, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” ²⁶He said to him, “What is written in the law? What do you read there?” ²⁷He answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” ²⁸And he said to him, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.”

My friend Charles asked the preacher, “When a person wants to know if he or she is saved, why don’t you give the answer Jesus gave?” The preacher could not respond to Charles. He was on a different wavelength. He had had pounded into him his whole life the idea that you must confess Jesus Christ as personal savior. He followed the words of Paul in Romans 10:9: “if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”(This is what as been termed the “Romans road to salvation.”)¹ That could give a person the date and time of when he/she was saved.

Jesus’s answer is “Love!”The person who is saved will love God, will love neighbor, and will love self. The person who will inherit eternal life is the person who loves! In Luke, Jesus followed this teaching with the parable of the Good Samaritan.

In the wake of the terrible shootings last week of the ten little girls in their schoolhouse, the Amish have something to teach us about the meaning of love. Although they shun attention and the influence of the culture around them, they taught us about forgiveness. Their practice of forgiveness unfolded in four public acts. Now, remember their pain and heartache. Remember how their quiet life was shattered by violence and gunshots. Keep in mind the normal societal response of punishment, retribution, of taking an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. First, some elders visited Marie Roberts, the wife of the murderer, to offer forgiveness. Then, the families of the slain girls invited the widow to their own children's funerals. Next, they requested that all relief monies intended for Amish families be shared with Marie Roberts and her children.

¹Wikipedia, “Salvation”

And, finally, in an astonishing act of reconciliation, more than thirty members of the Amish community attended the funeral of the killer. This is more than confessing with one's lips Jesus Christ as personal savior. This is acting in love. This is imitating Jesus whose words from the cross were, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing."²

On another occasion a man came up to Jesus and asked him what he must do to inherit eternal life. Once again, Jesus' answer involved more than confessing with one's lips. As reported in Mark 10, the man "ran up and knelt before [Jesus]".³ "What must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Jesus rehearsed the commandments having to do with loving one's neighbor. The man, a good man, a respectful man, said he had faithfully kept these commandments since he was young. Jesus had compassion. Listen to these words. "Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, 'go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.'⁴

The man couldn't do it. He loved God, he loved his neighbor, and he loved himself, and he wanted to become one of Jesus disciples, but he also loved his things—his money. He was not willing to give up his symbols of status and prestige.

We may confess with our lips that we love Jesus, or that we love God and our neighbor, but following Jesus means giving up the power that wealth has over us. Our wealth gets in the way of taking stands on behalf of the poor and oppressed if it costs us power or prestige. What does following Jesus mean when we enter the voting booth? How does my wealth affect my vote for raising the minimum wage? How does it affect my fears about the border and immigration and security? How does my wealth affect my feelings about taxation and welfare recipients and teachers' salaries? We may confess with our lips that we love Jesus, but when it comes time to make a pledge to the church, how will we respond? Will we love God, neighbor, and self, and resist the power that our wealth has over us?

It is important to note in these passages that we inherit eternal life— we do not buy it. It is a free gift from a merciful God. We give what we have for God's use, because it belongs to God in the first place.

So now, if you are concerned about whether you are saved or not, I invite you to relax and rest upon God's loving grace. When Jesus taught the crowd of disciples about the personal sacrifices necessary for salvation, they asked him, "Then who can be saved?"⁵

Jesus' answer was, "For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible."⁶

²Luke 23:34

³ Mark 10:17

⁴Mark 10:21

⁵Mark 10:26

⁶Mark 10:27