



We considered two accounts of people “coming” to Jesus this Sunday – “little children”, in 10v13-16, and “a man” (a “rich young ruler” according to Luke’s account), in 10v17-22. We noted that Mark wants us to contrast these “comings” (note repeated references to entering/receiving “the kingdom of God”, v15, 23, 24, 25, and the emphasis on the disciples’ response).

We asked how we come to Jesus – what do we bring in our “coming to church” backpacks?

### 1 – Pack your bag with nothing (v13-16)

Despite the disciples’ protestations (v13), Jesus is keen to welcome little children because he considers them precious, but also because they are a picture – a picture of how all of us must come to Christ if we want to be counted as his (v15). What he holds up isn’t so much what children have or are like, but what they lack – how they come with nothing; empty-handed and keen to receive. This is how we are to come – with nothing in our backpacks. What a relief in a world in which almost everything needs to be earned and worked for!

### 2 – Throw out everything that’s already in there (v17-25)

Mark continues Jesus’ teaching on the subject with the example of someone who comes to Jesus very differently. At first sight, we may commend this man for the earnestness and humility with which he comes (check out v17). Yet Jesus is quick to expose his heart – this man thinks that he can achieve salvation through the things he can do (note the nature of his question, v17, and his response to Jesus’ gentle challenge in v18-19). This man doesn’t realise that only God is good, and that God’s standard of holiness is far beyond anything he could achieve.

And so, loving him, Jesus challenges him to “come, follow” – a call not just to keep another rule, but to follow Jesus (v21). Sadly, the man is unwilling to give up his works and wealth and walks away (v22). Jesus makes the shocking statement (3 times – v23, 24 & 25) of how hard it is (particularly for the rich) to enter the kingdom of God. It would be easier to squeeze a 6-foot camel through the 1.5mm eye of a needle!

### 3 – Let Jesus fill your bag instead (v26-31)

“Amazed” by Jesus’ words, a coin begins to drop with the disciples and they ask a much better question in v26: “Who then *can* be saved?”. They have rightly realised that there is nothing anyone could possibly *do* to achieve God’s standard. Jesus responds with a wonderful truth in v27. What no human being can do – save themselves – God can do, because God the Son came and lived a perfect life of obedience and died a substitutionary death! Praise the Lord! Jesus concludes with a promise in v29-30 – those who have given up much to follow him will be blessed 100 times as much in this age and granted eternal life.

Here are a few questions you might want to use with your group...

1. What do you think of the idea of a “coming to church” backpack? Does that ring true with you as a concept? What tends to be in your “coming to church” backpack (either consciously, or lurking undiscovered at the bottom)?
2. How does Mark contrast the children and the man? How does he contrast their views of God?
3. What is it about how children “come” and “receive” that Jesus is so keen to commend? How is that a challenge and encouragement to us?
4. How do we cling onto good works? What “Christian rules” do we see at work in our church and wider Christian culture. What “Christian rules” do you grade yourself (and others) against?
5. Can there be such a thing as a rich or well-off Christian? Where would we go in the Bible to see that? How do we cling onto wealth? How can we have and use money in a godly way?
6. What encouragements can take from Jesus’ promise in v29-30? Is this not the prosperity gospel? How might we see this promise fulfilled in our lives?