Sermon: **What must I do to receive eternal life?** (Mark 10.17)

Over the years Sharon and I have moved on several times and have been surprised by who from the churches has kept in touch, and who has not – relationships are complex, and often misunderstood.

TEXT gets to the heart of our relationship with God, also complex and misunderstood.

[1] Uncertainty

The rich man was a good man, kept the Law, but was still uncertain about his relationship with God.

He did not feel worthy and felt more was demanded by God.

Was this because he felt God as distant, maybe disapproving? Had he done something to offend? Did God need some sort of appeasing or payment? TEXT

This is a common feeling and can drive us apart from God. Are *we* worthy of God? Does God demand some appeasing or payment from *us*? If so, what? TEXT

[2] Eternal Life is a gift, not a reward

When it comes to Christmas in UK, if you get a card, social convention is that you send one too. Similarly when invited to dinner you later invite them back. In most relationships there is give and take. And when the person giving is not known well you might suspect a catch – try giving away $10 notes to strangers!

So when God offers eternal life – life with an eternal quality, now and for eternity – you either suspect a catch or feel that you must reciprocate. TEXT

But God offers a gift with no strings, none at all. No catch, no need to reciprocate.

[3] You need empty hands

But just because there is no catch or need to reciprocate, this does not mean you need do nothing.

When our hands are full to receive a gift we have to put down what is in our hands.

God offers eternal life; to receive it we may need to let go of something which we consider valuable.
The rich man had to let go of his riches. Riches might not be our problem area, but we have one, or more. Anne Stoddart had to let go of so much as she moved into the main house at Rowena Jackson.

Sharon and I cleared out our garage and let go of so much stuff, but hung on to so much also.

What are we hanging on to and will not part with for anything? It could be that this is exactly what we need to let go of to receive eternal life.

Then and only then, can God work on us, slowly transforming us into the likeness of Jesus Christ.