

### The Rich Young Ruler Comes to Jesus

#### Mark 10:17-31

Mark 10:17-31 – *“Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, “Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?”<sup>18</sup> So Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God.<sup>19</sup> You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not bear false witness,’ ‘Do not defraud,’ ‘Honor your father and your mother.’”<sup>20</sup> And he answered and said to Him, “Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth.”*

*<sup>21</sup> Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, “One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.”<sup>22</sup> But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.*

*<sup>23</sup> Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, “How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!”<sup>24</sup> And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, “Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God!<sup>25</sup> It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”*

*<sup>26</sup> And they were greatly astonished, saying among themselves, “Who then can be saved?”<sup>27</sup> But Jesus looked at them and said, “With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible.”*

*<sup>28</sup> Then Peter began to say to Him, “See, we have left all and followed You.”<sup>29</sup> So Jesus answered and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s,<sup>30</sup> who shall 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.<sup>31</sup> But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”*

#### Background Notes

The setting for these events was the east side of the Jordan River, an area that was then called Perea. The Lord was on His final journey up to Jerusalem. The man who came running to Jesus to ask how he could inherit eternal life is known as “the Rich Young Ruler.” He has “great possessions” (v22). The parallel account in Matthew 19 states that he was a young man, and Luke 18 says that he was a ruler. Thus, the “Rich Young Ruler.”

In verse 25 the Lord said, “It’s easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” What’s that all about - a camel going through the eye of a needle? The commentaries give us all kinds of interpretations. One interpretation is that the eye of the needle was a narrow mountain pass between rocks. Another popular interpretation is that the eye of the needle was a small door built into the larger city gates. When the large city gates were closed at night, the smaller doors, called “the eye of the needle,” could be opened to safely admit a small

number of people or animals. When a traveling merchant would come along with his camel loaded down with his wares, he would have to strip all the wares from the camel to push and shove and squeeze the camel through “the eye of the needle.” That’s a nice idea because of the application: we must strip away everything that hangs us up and holds us back from following Jesus if we’re going to enter the Kingdom. But most likely, the interpretation of the term, the “eye of the needle,” is actually a sewing needle. Dr. Luke used the word for a physician’s needle in the parallel account, Luke 18:25. So it’s a vivid and picturesque way of stating the impossibility of entering the Kingdom without supernatural intervention. But with God, all things are possible.

In verse 29 the Lord talked about leaving house, brother, sister, father, mother, wife, or children for His sake and the gospel’s sake. Does that mean that when you become a Christian you have to “go all out” for the Lord in service? Does it mean you get a divorce, leave your family, and so forth to serve the Lord alone? No. No. No way. That’s certainly not what the Lord meant. The idea is that when you are committed to the Lord Jesus Christ and your desire is to serve Him, your priorities will change. The Lord becomes Number One. Your material possessions and even your family relationships all come under the Lordship of Christ. You may even give up marriage, a family, a home and some material possessions for the sake of serving Christ.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. No one is good

The Lord was not denying His deity in verse 18. No - He was showing the rich young ruler that he had a faulty concept of what “good” really means. The Bible certainly teaches this point – that no one is good.

Not everyone would agree with that statement. Maybe you don’t agree. However, that certainly is a doctrinal point that’s taught in the Bible, and it’s taught right here. In reference to God’s standards of what is good, **we all fall short – no one is good**. Romans 3:23 says, “*All have sinned and come short of the glory of God*”. And Romans 3:10-12 says: “*As it is written: “There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good - no, not one”.*” In reference to God’s standard, there is no one who is good. Relative to one another we may be good or bad, but in reference to God’s perfect standards, no one is good. Everyone needs to come to Jesus Christ for salvation, because no one is good.

### 2. No one earns salvation

If ever there were a person in the Bible who might have had a shot at earning his own salvation, it’s this man - the rich young ruler! He had a lot going for him - but it was not enough.

He was sincere. He wasn't a hypocrite, like one of the Pharisees. This rich young ruler was very sincere in his approach to Christ – but that was not enough. Not only that, he was enthusiastic. He came running to the Lord - but that was not enough. He was reverent. He knelt before the Lord - but that was not enough. He was a respectable person. As a rich young man he certainly gave money to the poor, and as a ruler he fulfilled his civic duties – but that was not enough! He kept the Law of Moses - at least from *his perspective* he kept the Law. Verse 20: *“Teacher, all these things [these things from the Law] I have kept from my youth.”* He thought he had done all he needed to inherit eternal life.

However, the Lord said, *“One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.”* What the Lord was doing here was showing this man that he **hadn't really kept the Law**. The man thought, from his perspective, he'd kept the Law. But the Lord's response showed him that the man really hadn't kept the Law at all.

Remember how the Lord summed up keeping the Law? Matthew 22:37-40: *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”*

It's important to realize that **the Lord was not stating the way of salvation for mankind** when He said to this man, *“... Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.”* No! He was simply showing the rich young ruler that he hadn't really kept the Law – in fact he had broken two of the important commandments of the Law. God was not really Number One in his life - his possessions were! And he didn't really love His neighbor as himself; he loved his possessions!

In verse 21 we read, *“Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him.”* But even that was not good enough to save the man. The Lord loves you, too - but that's not enough to save you. You must respond in faith and come to Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. No one earns salvation.

## Practical Applications

### 1. Aren't you glad that you're not rich?

Just as riches often keep people from coming to Christ, so they often keep people from serving Jesus Christ in full commitment. Listen to I Timothy 6:9, written to believers: *“But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.”* Yes, riches can be used for the Lord, but most Christians can't handle a lot of money or use it properly. (I wish the Lord would test me in that area...I guess you do, too! [Laughter])

But seriously speaking, if riches keep us from coming to Christ or following Christ in full commitment - aren't you glad that you're not rich?

## 2. You can't make a better investment than to serve Christ!

If you were to invest your money and make 10% on your investments, you'd say, "Not too bad!" Now suppose you made 100% on your investments? Hey, can you beat a deal like that? Yes you can! Look at verse 30: *A hundredfold!* What percent is that? That's 10,000%. You can't make a better investment than that!

You can't make a better investment of your life than to serve Christ. The people who **appear** to have it made in this life don't **really** have it made. Verse 31: *"But many who are first will be last, and the last first."* Believers who serve Jesus Christ have **really** made the best investment! We not only have eternal life, but even in this life the Lord gives to us beyond measure: You will not only *"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."*

Just one illustration from verse 30: When I left my job as a research scientist to serve the Lord full time, my wife and I wondered whether we would be able to provide the things for our children that we could have provided if I hadn't left my job and gone into the Lord's work full time—things like summer camp and travel, and so forth. Well, let me tell you, our family has done more travel, met more wonderful people, spent more time at Christian camps, and had more great experiences than we ever would have had if I had stayed in secular employment! Don't get me wrong, now - of course that doesn't mean God calls everyone to leave their jobs! It's just an illustration of how God means what He says. Yes, the blessings come with persecutions, as the verse says. But even the persecutions are part of a good investment, because with persecutions we grow and mature in the faith.

The Lord means what He says: you can't make a better investment than to serve Christ!