

## **The Rich Young Ruler**

**Introduction:** Today as we continue our series on “Through the life of Jesus: Matthew Edition” we come to a discussion between Jesus and a man commonly referred to as “the rich young ruler.” I am sure Jesus had conversations with thousands of people during his earthly ministry but Matthew Mark and Luke all include this conversation in their Gospels and as we dig into the passage we will see that this one conversation answers a question that we have asked during this series, a questions the disciples and others had asked and a question we still ask today, “What must I do to have eternal life?”

So lets pray and then we will examine the text.

## **Matthew 19:16-17a**

### **Read the Word: Matthew 19:16-17a**

*<sup>16</sup> Then someone came to him and said, “Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?” <sup>17</sup> And he said to him, “Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good.*

### **What’s going on in Matthew?**

- Two weeks ago
  - Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven
  - Trying to understand how does the kingdom of heaven work
    - Jesus has said a lot of things about the kingdom of heaven
  - In eternal life what really matters
    - Closeness to Jesus
- Jesus explains how we should act as citizens of God’s kingdom
  - Forgiveness
  - Last week reconciliation
- Leaves Galilee crosses the Jordan and enters Judea
  - Movement towards Jerusalem

- His opposition shows up
  - Pharisees questioning him about divorce
- Reinforcing the reality that Jesus cares more about the least among
  - Jesus prays for and welcomes little children
- In the middle of all this a man comes up to Jesus

### **Who is this guy and why is he called the rich young ruler?**

- Who is this Guy Why is he often called The rich young ruler
  - Mathew: Rich and Young
  - Mark: Rich
  - Luke: Rich and Ruler
- Comes up to Jesus
  - Mark: runs up and kneels before him
- The question
  - Some have speculated that he too was trying to trick Jesus
    - Unlikely
  - Genuine desires Eternal life
  - Recognizes Jesus' unique authority
    - Talmud
- The disciples listening anxiously

- Two weeks ago “Who is the Greatest”

## **How does Jesus Respond?**

- Jesus’ odd response
  - First questions the man’s view of him
  - The man calls him teacher
    - Respectful
    - Above and beyond to recognize Jesus’ authority
  - Jesus is not just a good teacher
  - Consider the core belief
    - Could he teach something greater than the Word of God
    - Why does he come to Jesus for the answer for eternal life
    - Look at his motivation to realize that the core belief that compels him to kneel before Jesus and ask him the question points to Christ’s divinity
  - Passage pointed to by those who deny the Trinity
    - All of Scripture
    - As we will see he does give instructions beyond what the Written word of God requires

- Jesus recognizes that only God is good and only God has the authority define good and evil
- Jesus then acts in that authority

**Transition:** Jesus first causes the man to think seriously about who Jesus is before he answers his question about eternal life. Only after he has done that does he move on to the man's question...

## **Matthew 19:17b-20**

### **Read the Word: Matthew 19:17b-20**

*If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.”<sup>18</sup> He said to him, “Which ones?” And Jesus said, “You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness;<sup>19</sup> Honor your father and mother; also, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”<sup>20</sup> The young man said to him, “I have kept all these; what do I still lack?”*

### **How does Jesus answer the man’s question?**

- Challenging the man to go deeper until finally Jesus reveals his heart.
  - Pretty Shocking
  - Not love God, or worship God but follow the commandments
  - Go on to complete this picture
    - Pause and recognize that this is not how we would answer this question
- Not anything new
  - Not what the man is looking for

- There is something different about Jesus
- He wants a key because He believes Jesus has the key to eternal life.
  - “Which Ones”

### **Jesus goes a little deeper**

- Responds by listing some commandments
  - Deal with our treatment of others
  - Seen as pretty basic
  - Easily confirmed
- Matthew is the only one to include “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

### **The man hears and is still not satisfied**

- I have Kept all these commandments
- Frustrated
- Recognizes that he still does not have the assurance of eternal life
  - He still feels that lack and recognizes that Jesus has something more.

- So he keeps pressing

**Transition:**

As he keeps pressing, trying to find the answer the one thing he is missing

Jesus answers in the next verses...

## **Matthew 19:21-22**

### **Read the Word: Matthew 19:21-22**

*<sup>21</sup> Jesus said to him, “If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” <sup>22</sup> When the young man heard this word, he went away grieving, for he had many possessions.*

### **Jesus gets down to the man’s heart**

- The man has been pushing and pushing
  - Trying to get a clear answer from Jesus
  - What is the Key
  - What do I lack
- Mark: Look at him and loved him
- Jesus said give up everything
  - He saw his heart and saw that while he surrendered to God
  - His wealth held him captive
  - What for many would be blessing was to him a prison
- So often the things we cherish the most
  - The things we find comfort in

- Find joy in
- Find peace in
- Keep us from experiencing the love, joy, and peace of Christ
- The root is the end “follow me”
  - What are you going to chase after
  - What are you going to follow after
    - Wealth
    - Jesus
- Notice that Jesus does not say this to everyone
  - Nicodemus
    - Be born again
  - The rich young ruler
    - Sell all you have and give to the poor
  - So often people asked Jesus this question and looked for a theological answer
    - Jesus sees the heart and sees what is holding people captive
    - Invites them to be free from that captivity and follow him.

**Transition:** The rich young ruler came to Jesus. Seeking wisdom, seeking eternal life, but when Jesus invites him to free himself of his wealth which held him captive he walked away grieving. He had followed the law. He was passionate. He was seeking. But Jesus invited him to give up everything and for the young man that was too much. So as the man walks away Jesus turns to his disciples.

## **Matthew 19:23-26**

### **Read the Word: Matthew 19:23-26**

*<sup>23</sup> Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Truly I tell you, it will be hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven. <sup>24</sup> Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” <sup>25</sup> When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astounded and said, “Then who can be saved?” <sup>26</sup> But Jesus looked at them and said, “For mortals it is impossible, but for God all things are possible.”*

### **Then Jesus turns to His disciples**

- What does Jesus mean when he says, “23-24”
  - To truly follow after Jesus means we need to completely surrender over to Him.
  - Often times we see our possessions as things we possess
    - And for some people they are just that tools to function in the world
    - But for others they do not possess their material things rather they are possessed by them.
    - Held captive by the things they love

- Take up your cross and follow me

### **The Disciple's Question**

- Wealth=blessing
- They have been wondering the same question the young man asked
  - Who is the greatest
  - Keeps giving different answers
    - The poor in spirit
    - Those who are persecuted
    - Be perfect like your father in heaven
    - Abandon all your possessions and follow me
    - If you desire to be perfect
- The weight of this has been pressing
  - The perfect candidate
  - All their frustration boils up in this cry
    - Who then can be saved

## Jesus answers the Disciples

- “For mortals it is impossible”
  - you and I will not enter the kingdom of heaven if we are not perfected
    - we will not enter eternal life if we carry the stain of sin or the chains of captivity
- But Jesus does not end there
- “For mortals it is impossible but for God all things are possible”
  - Because of Jesus’ life death and resurrection although we are imperfect we are perfected because he raps us in His righteousness his love and his power
    - Romans 8 Paul says, “28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. 29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. 30 And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.”

- Sometimes we preach a Gospel of cheap grace
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer
  - “Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ.”
  - We sometimes preach a gospel that demands nothing except some fancy words and a rushed prayer
- But Jesus says abandon everything and follow me.
- He does not want us to wait until death to be conformed to his image or to reflect his love and life
  - He wants us to begin living as Sons and Daughters now, to right now live as Citizens of his kingdom loyal to the King of heaven
- When hear Jesus commands to abandon all, to care for the poor, to be perfect like our Father in heaven is perfect
  - We realize man I do not measure up
  - That could never do enough good or be selfless enough to earn salvation
  - That’s why he came and took that burden upon himself
    - Carries the weight of our sins
    - Our insufficiencies

- Our failures
  - He carried that burden on his shoulders as he was nailed to the Cross at Calvary.
- Jesus knows we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven on our own.
- That's why he invites us, each one of us, just like he invited the rich young ruler not only to give up the things holding us captive but to follow him.
  - God does not want righteousness for righteousness' sake
  - Instead he offers hope, and freedom and love
    - The call to follow him

## Here's the challenge for us

- If you came and knelt before Jesus as said what do I lack, what must I do to enter eternal life
- And when he looked in your heart what would say
  - Would you tell you to sell everything
  - to abandon pride
  - To set aside the praise of others
  - Or faith in our ambition and accomplishments
  - Or to sacrifice our obsession with comfort
- Difficult because the things that holds the most captive are usually good things
- In preparation...
  - To sacrifice my death grip on security
    - Financial
    - Relationships
    - Home security
    - Belief
      - Missionary stories
    - Ministry
  - In many cases a security mindset is good

- But in my life sometimes my love, need, captivity to security
  - Hesitate and turn away with grief
- **What chains do you have to give up?**
  - **What do you need surrender to God?**
  - **So that he can carry that burden**
  - **He can make the impossible possible and perfect us by his grace and power**
  - **What do you need to abandon so when Jesus says follow me you can move without hesitation?**

**Lets pray**