The Rich Young Ruler and the Kingdom of God

Introduction

Praise the Lord to everyone. Today, I want to meditate on the subject of the rich young ruler. Can you all please turn to the Gospel of Mark, chapter 10? I want to read from verses 17 to 31.

"And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions."

"And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved? And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible."

"Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee. And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life. But many that are first shall be last; and the last first."

Lord, bless this word. A quick word of prayer. *Lord, we thank You, for this word You have given unto us, we praise You and worship You. Lord, help us, lead us, and guide us to understand Your word. Lord, we seek the help of the Holy Spirit of God. We commit these things into Your hands and ask this prayer in the mighty name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.*

The Rich Young Ruler: His Qualities and Approach

The Rich Young Ruler's Search for Eternal Life

From this passage that we read, we are familiar with it. We know all about the rich ruler. We have this recorded in the New Testament in three Gospels: in Matthew 19:22,

Matthew records him as a young man; in Luke 18:18, he is recorded as a ruler; and in Mark, we see that he is a rich man. He is a rich young ruler. This is a very important passage, and all the important things are addressed here. We learn about eternal life, as Jesus Christ was talking about eternal life, and the kingdom of God, and following Christ.

We see this rich young ruler; he came to Jesus running and knelt before Him. He has everything: he is at the age, he has riches, he has great positions, and he has influence as a ruler. He has everything the world values. When the world looks at him, the world says he has everything. But from Heaven's perspective, something is lacking, something is missing. He is searching for something; he wants to get it. He knows that something is missing in his life. We see there is an emptiness in his heart. There is an emptiness in his heart.

In God's word, it is recorded in Ecclesiastes 3:11, that God has put eternity in man's heart. The vacuum is there. That vacuum has to be filled by God Himself. Otherwise, people feel empty in their hearts and keep searching for things to fulfill that. It is a vacuum. We see this man has everything, but he does not have the assurance of having eternal life in his heart. From the outside, he seemed ok. If you look from the outside, he had everything. But when you look inside, there is an emptiness. That is why he came running to Jesus.

The Importance of Youth in Following Christ

We see almost seven things here; he has the right things in his life. He came at a very young age, which is the time of his life. This young age is very important in one's life. In youth, we have more energy, more strength, and more courage. Whatever decisions we make at that young age will influence our lives. This man is at the right age and is coming to Lord Jesus Christ. It is good for a young man to bear the yoke of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We see in all the scriptures that God was calling young people to serve Him. We see Samuel, when he was a child, was called. David was called when he was a shepherd at a young age, before he became the king of Israel. Jeremiah was also called when he was young. Timothy was also called in his childhood. This young age is very important. But many people, many young people, may think that they have a lot of time to accept the Lord and to serve the Lord. They are not very serious about accepting the Lord or serving the Lord. We do not know the time and period in which we are living. It is very important to come to the Lord at a very young age and serve the Lord.

And some may think we can serve the Lord after we retire. It is very easy; we do not have anything to bother us. We can sit, relax, and then serve the Lord. But at that age—our old age—we are not as active as we are when we are young. We cannot always be active, I am not saying that. But when we wait upon the Lord, as we already heard in the conference, we become young. Age is not the criterion, but we can feel our age as we grow older. The mobility, the body is not supporting us to move fast. It is very encouraging and a good thing for a young man to come to God, to come to the Lord at

that age. In God's word we also see in Ecclesiastes 12:1, “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.” It is good for any man to remember his Creator at a very young age.

At a young age, people hear two voices. One is the voice of Jesus Christ, and the other is the voice of the enemy. Jesus Christ says, “Follow Me.” The world, or the enemy, says, “Follow yourself, follow me.” Jesus Christ says, “Follow Me,” to give us eternal life. But the enemy calls us toward destruction. This is an important stage in anyone's life—to come to the Lord, follow Him, and receive eternal life.

Some young people like to admire celebrities; they want to have heroes to follow. Some sportsmen have role models to follow. But our greatest leader or hero to follow is our Lord Jesus Christ. Celebrities grow old and fade away. Sportsmen retire. Kings die. But our Lord Jesus Christ is the greatest leader we can follow. He said, “I am the Bread of Life, I am the True Vine, I am the Way, I am the Life, I am Eternal Life, I am the Resurrection, I am the Good Shepherd. I died, but I am living evermore.” He is our greatest leader that we can follow in this world. Young life is very important; it is important to come to the Lord and accept Him. This rich young rule came at the age of his life to Lord Jesus Christ.

Influence, Status, and Action

Influence as a Ruler

Secondly, he came in his right position as a ruler. As a ruler, he came to Lord Jesus Christ. A ruler can influence the people in his country or the region he is ruling. Once upon a time, there was an emperor called Constantine. He was a Christian. During his rule, he encouraged believers to gather, worship, and pray. He built many churches and encouraged many to come to Lord Jesus Christ. As a ruler, he could influence more people to follow Jesus Christ.

Even we also can influence others. Parents can influence their children. Teachers can influence their students. Employers can influence their workers. We can also influence other believers. Older believers can influence younger believers. As we know from God's word, Joseph influenced Egypt. Daniel influenced Babylon. Nehemiah influenced Jerusalem. Esther influenced the entire nation. As a young man and as a ruler, he could have influenced many people who could have followed Jesus Christ. The greatest leaders are not those who command others. The greatest leaders are those who first bow before God and then lead others to follow Jesus Christ. We see, secondly, he came in the right position as a ruler.

Status, Action, and the Presence of the Lord

And thirdly, he came in the right status. He had great possessions. He was a rich man. Jesus never condemned being wealthy or being a wealthy man. Abraham was wealthy, Job was wealthy, and Boaz was wealthy. Even in Luke 8:3, we see Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who ministered to Him out of

their substance. If we are rich as believers, we can be a blessing to many other believers. Paul, in Romans 12:8, says, “He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity.” God delights in generous hearts. Believers, if they are rich, can build churches, print Bibles, and support missionaries. They can feed the hungry and be a blessing to many other believers. This rich young ruler came with the right status and the right position. First, we see he came at a young age, at the age. He came as a ruler with influence.

Fourthly, we see he came in right action. In action, he came running towards Jesus. He came running towards Jesus. He was not simply coming slowly or walking. He ran towards Jesus, thinking, “I should not miss this opportunity to meet Lord Jesus Christ. If I miss this opportunity, I will never get it again.” Seeking the presence of Lord Jesus Christ. We see the presence of Lord Jesus Christ in Psalm 16:11: “In thy presence is fullness of joy.” When we come into the presence of the Lord, we have the fullness of joy. The greatest thing is not the church or a building, nor the music that we hear in the church. Where two or three gather, He said, “I am there.” The presence of Lord Jesus Christ is there, where there is fullness of joy.

And in Psalm 122:1 we see, David says, “I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord.” When somebody says, “Let us go to the house of the Lord,” David says he was very glad to hear that and to go with the saints into the presence of the Lord. There is joy, the fullness of joy, in the house of the Lord—in the presence of the Lord.

When Abraham left Lot, he settled in the plains of Mamre. When he settled there in the plains of Mamre, the first thing he did was build an altar. He built an altar to God. He started worshipping there. Then we see in Genesis 18:1, that he met with the Lord. And the Lord appeared to him in the plains of Mamre. He sat in the tent door in the heat of the day. As he was sitting in front of the door, the Lord appeared to him. Abraham met the Lord in the plains of Mamre.

In that same place, he also received the promise of Isaac: “Isaac is going to be born to you, to Sarah.” He received that blessing in the plains of Mamre. And also from that place, he prayed for the rescue of Lot from Sodom and Gomorrah. This is the place where Abraham had worship, the presence of the Lord, the blessing of the Lord, the promise of the Lord, and the intercession of the Lord. This is the presence of the Lord, where there are fullness of joy and the fatness of the Lord, of the presence of the Lord. When we come into the presence of the Lord, or we come into fellowship with the Lord, we will experience all these things in our lives. And we can enjoy His presence.

Attitude and Humility

The Humility of the Rich Young Ruler

And then he came with the right attitude. And he came with the right attitude. How did he come? He came running. And then he knelt down before Lord Jesus Christ. He knelt down. He had that humility. We observe a young man, a rich man, and a ruler who

is coming, running towards Jesus Christ and kneeling down before Him publicly. How much humility he has.

We have that word in James 4:6, that God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble. He was so humble that he knelt before the Lord Jesus Christ publicly. He came. We see all these things. He had the right things in his life. He approached the Lord Jesus Christ at the right age, at the right time, with the right position, with the right status, and with the right attitude.

Humility is the attitude of our Lord Jesus Christ. He said, "I am meek and lowly." This King of glory wrapped Himself with a towel and started washing the feet of His disciples. Can we imagine the Creator washing the feet of the creation? How humble He is, how much humility He has. We see this in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And amazingly, when Peter wrote in his letter that we have to clothe ourselves with this humility, he was not referring to human humility, but to the divine humility we must wear. He says it is clothes we have to put on. We can wear new clothes, but this garment is different—the cloth of humility: meek and lowly.

How water flows. Water flows from high places to lower places. When there is a slope, the steeper the slope, the faster the water comes down that slope. In a similar way, blessings will come when we humble ourselves.

Lord Jesus Christ, He humbled Himself not only before the creation, but also to the Heavenly Father on the cross of Calvary. He humbled Himself unto death. He went down to such a lowly state. The blessings will also be greater upon Him. How? His name was made higher than every other name. He became low, and then He was raised up to the top. For what purpose? That all things in heaven, on earth, and under the earth should bow down before His name and confess that He is the Lord. Our God has made His name that powerful, especially because He humbled Himself so much before the Father.

The Greatest Question: Inheriting Eternal Life

Now this young man, he came again with the right question, the right question. This rich young ruler came with the question, asking, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He did not come to ask Lord Jesus Christ how he could become more successful in his life, or how he could earn more money, or how he could protect his future, or how he could continue to be a ruler. The greatest question anybody can ask is, "How shall I inherit eternal life?" Many people ignore this question, but this is a very important question: How shall I inherit eternal life?

Daniel 12:2 says, "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt." This young person knows that the grave is not the end of life. There is life after death. Maybe he read these verses from Daniel's chapters—we do not know. He knows that there is another life after this life. He came with the right question to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Who can answer all our questions in our life? We may have a lot of questions about eternal life, about being born again, about the rapture, and about the judgment of God. Who can answer all our questions? It is only the Lord Jesus Christ who can answer all our questions.

And lastly, this young man has come to the right person who can answer all his questions. Many people, if they have questions, go to books or to some saints to ask, or they look at some scriptures or religious books. In John's Gospel 5:39, the Lord Jesus Christ said, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." You go to the scriptures and see, read the scriptures, understand the scriptures—they all point towards Me. Do those books have eternal life? No, it is the Lord Jesus Christ who has that eternal life. Who is the person we can trust and go to for our answers? Who is the right person we can trust? It is our Lord Jesus Christ alone. This man has done all these things in the right way, and he came to Lord Jesus Christ with the right question.

The Love of Jesus and the Challenge of Riches

The Infinite Love of Jesus

Then Jesus looked at him and loved him. Jesus knows this person not only from the outside, but also from the inside. He knows what questions are in his heart. He knows what struggles are inside his heart. He knows who is trusting Him from the heart. In the Gospel of John 2:24-25, we see that "But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man." Jesus Christ knows everybody. He knows every person. There is no need to go and tell Him that this person is like that or like this—He knows everything. Looking at his situation, though he was not ready to part with his riches or leave his wealth, Jesus Christ looked at him and loved him.

My dear friends, who can love us like that in this world? Human love is a limited love. First, it starts with ourselves, then our family, our fellowship, our group. It cannot go beyond that. But our Lord Jesus Christ loved so much with His infinite love.

We may have many failures in our lives. We may not be successful. We may not serve the Lord as He expects us to. But still, He loves us. That is His nature. He loves us with His eternal love.

Sometimes we may think that people are ignoring us. They offend us, and we may feel that nobody cares about us. We are alone in this life. We have many struggles. We have many silent prayers. We have many tears in our eyes. Who is looking at us all this time? He loves us—Lord Jesus Christ. He has looked at us, He is looking at us, and He is loving us.

Isaiah 46:4 says, "And even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you." He is our great good shepherd. When we are hurt, when we are wounded, He will come and lift us, take us, put us on His shoulders, and carry us to His home to

heal us, even in old age, until the end of life, until the end of this age. Who can love us like that in this world?

The Obstacle of Riches and the Grace of God

This rich young ruler came with the right attitude and the right status. Yet, he was not able to accept the Lord Jesus Christ. We see his situation being compared by the Lord Jesus to a camel going through the eye of a needle. The eye of a needle is a very interesting comparison and illustration that the Lord Jesus Christ says.

Some time back in Jerusalem, it was told that there was a big gate to enter Jerusalem. And there was a small gate next to it. Because of security purposes, at night the big gate would be closed and only the small gate would be opened. And whoever visited had to squeeze through that small gate. That is called the eye of a needle.

When a camel comes there, it cannot enter. It cannot enter. That is why Lord Jesus Christ gives this example with the largest animal. He does not say some squirrel or some small animal can go inside easily. The largest animal, even if it is starving, fasting, and loses some weight, still cannot enter that needle—the eye of a needle.

That is where He compares that rich man. It is very hard. Not only hard—humanly, it is impossible. Impossible. At least, he has to squeeze through that door. Or we have to make that door bigger; otherwise, he cannot enter. Will it be possible for a man to increase, to broaden that door? Humanly impossible. If he has to go inside, he has to bend down on his knees, the camel has to bend down on the floor, unload everything, and squeeze through that door or crawl through the door. It is not possible.

Riches are coming in the way of a rich man. Riches are blocking him from entering into the kingdom of heaven. I think the obstacle is not the riches, but the heart in which he is trusting. His trust is in his riches. His heart is trusting his riches. I think that is the obstacle.

The camel represents everything man relies upon—wealth, achievement, pride, self-righteousness, and religion. The camel is like that big obstacle. And the needle is an entrance into the kingdom of God. All these characteristics are characteristics of the old man. The old man means Adam's man. Adam cannot enter into God's kingdom. The nature of Adam cannot enter into God's kingdom; it has to remain outside. Only outside God's kingdom. Someone prayed this morning that only the new creation enters into the kingdom of heaven. New creation—even a small thing can become an obstacle to entering the kingdom of God.

That is why the disciples were astonished. Then how can anybody be saved? The Israelites, or Jews, believed that if they were rich, that was a blessing from the Lord. If Abraham was rich, that meant he was blessed by God. If Jesus said that a rich man cannot enter the kingdom of God, then who can be saved? Humanly, it is impossible. Then He is diverting the focus from man to God. With man it is impossible, but with God

it is possible. God can make things happen. It is in the hands of God, who can make things happen.

Like Proverbs 21:1 says, “The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.” God can turn the ways of rivers and the heart of man. How can a rich man enter into God's kingdom? Only God can change him. It will happen through God— it is God's work. Salvation is from the Lord. Salvation is of the Lord. Only God can change. Either He can expand the kingdom of God or make the camel squeeze through the eye of a needle into the kingdom of God. He can change the heart, the heart of man. He can break the chains of greediness. God can break the chains of greediness and make him trust in God more than his wealth or his riches.

Salvation is of the Lord. You can see in the life of Zacchaeus, how he was changed when he encountered the Lord Jesus Christ, who told him to part with his riches to others. This is the miracle of the grace of God. With our own efforts we cannot enter. Camel kneeling down, unloading everything, crawling—these are all human efforts. With human efforts we cannot enter into the kingdom of God. We are saved by His grace. We are saved by His mercy and our faith—faith in Him. Let us not boast about the things or the works we do. It is purely by the grace of God that we can enter into the kingdom of God.

The Kingdom of God and Following Jesus

The Kingdom of God Is Christ Alone

The Kingdom of God is not what we normally think it is; it is Jesus Christ alone. The Kingdom of God is possessing Jesus Christ, winning Jesus Christ alone. Some may say the Kingdom of God is like Christ plus something—Christ plus wealth, Christ plus reputation, Christ plus influence. No, Christ alone Himself is the Kingdom of God. We cannot add anything to that; it will not qualify. We were looking for more qualifications to enter into the Kingdom of God, more than Jesus Christ. It is Christ Himself alone.

Here, the Lord Jesus Christ is inviting him to follow Him. Many focus on “sell what you have, sell everything you have.” But then Jesus said, “Follow Me.” “Follow Me” is an invitation to have a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Eternal life is not something that is achieved at one time; it is continuous fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ. Follow Me. Following Jesus Christ. In John's Gospel 17:3, He says, “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” Eternal life is nothing but Jesus Christ Himself alone. It is required that we need to have continuous fellowship with Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ looked at that young rich ruler, He loved him, and He said, “Follow Me.” Follow Me. That means this is not the end of your life. You can sell your riches and give them to others and go back, but still, you will not get eternal life. You have to follow Me. There is a continuous relationship with Lord Jesus Christ. That is the partaking in eternal life. Jesus Christ Himself is the eternal life.

The Cost and Inheritance of Following Christ

We see the disciples had a lot of things they came to know about eternal life, the kingdom of God, and the difficulty of a rich man entering into the kingdom of God. Now Peter says, “Lord, then what will we get? We have left everything and we are following You.” Then Jesus promised them that they would receive a hundredfold, a hundredfold blessing. The hundredfold blessings may include a greater inheritance, the rich purpose of the Lord Jesus Christ, deeper joy, full communion with the Lord Jesus Christ, and Christ Himself becoming our inheritance. Christ Himself becoming our inheritance. Then He goes on to say, “You will receive all these blessings a hundredfold. But it will also include persecution.” It will also include persecution. The kingdom of God contains both the cross and the crown. Both the cross and the crown. The Lord Jesus Christ clearly told them that to enter into the kingdom of God, you will also have to face persecution. And then He goes on to say, “The first shall be last and the last first.”

The rich young ruler—at the beginning, he looked like he was in first place. He was a rich man. He had good influence. He was young. He came with the right passion. He came to the right person. But then he walked away empty. He walked away empty.

He was just admiring Lord Jesus Christ as a good master, as a good person. But he was not accepting the invitation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Lord Jesus Christ invited him to have fellowship with Him. He was not ready to leave his riches. He was not ready to part with his riches for others. He was trusting in his riches. His heart was on his riches.

Whereas the fisherman Peter and the other disciples were uneducated and not important in society, they became the pillars of the Kingdom of God. The first shall become last, and the last shall become first. The foolish will become wise, the weak will become mighty, and the despised will become chosen.

The kingdom of heaven reverses the values of earth. Those whom we think are great saints in the beginning—we never know, they can become the last. Those who are despised, those who are unwise, those who are weak—they will become the first in the kingdom of God. The kingdom is reversing the rules of this world.

The Greatest Treasure: Jesus Christ

Who is the greatest treasure that we can possess? Who is the greatest treasure? This rich young ruler is not breaking the last commandment from the Ten Commandments, which says, “You shall not covet.” He is not breaking that law, but he is breaking the first law. What is that? “You shall have no other gods before Me.” A person cannot serve two masters at one time. Either you serve God or you serve Mammon, riches. Wherever your treasure is, there your heart will be also. For this young person, the rich young ruler, his riches are his treasure. His heart is with his riches, not with the Lord, not with God. He has followed everything, all ten steps, but has miserably failed in one. The Kingdom of God is not a checklist that you can complete and say, “I have done it. My job is done. This is my religion. This is the way I follow. Now I am ready to enter

the Kingdom of God." No. On the throne of his heart, who is sitting? His riches are sitting. He cannot leave his riches.

Who is our greatest treasure we can have in our life and make Him the king of our heart's throne? If somebody finds any precious jewel in his field, in any field, what does he do? The first thing he will do is sell everything he has. Then he tries to go and buy that field or buy that precious stone. That is the important thing—that desire should be there in our hearts to possess.

First, we have to realize: who is the real treasure? Who is the real treasure? The real treasure is our Lord Jesus Christ. Is our Lord Jesus Christ. Do you think He was a poor man? He was so rich in heavenly places. We see in Philippians 2:9 and II Corinthians 8:9: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."

He is a rich man, richer than anybody else. This whole world belongs to Him. Do you see how many jewels, precious stones, how much gold, how much silver there is in this world? That all belongs to God. He is so rich, you can never imagine. But He became poor for us, for our sake. He came down and offered His life. There is a great exchange. He offered His life that we can become rich, that we can become citizens of His kingdom, that we can receive His eternal life, that we can go to the place where He is.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the greatest treasure we can possess. May the Lord bless this word and help us to follow Him.

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