

Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ

Rich Young Ruler

Last time...Tender: Jesus loved and blessed the little children

Terse: Jesus is indignant when anyone prevents/hinders anyone from coming to Him

Teaching: To enter into the kingdom of God, a person must choose
(we all have individual responsibility for our God-given free will choice)
to humble himself/herself before God and be converted and become as a little
child...be childlike, having the characteristics of a child

The flesh, the devil, and the world all violently oppose such a conversion

This time...an example of that opposition to be converted and become a little child –
The Rich Young Ruler

The encounter with “the rich young ruler” is in Matt 19, Luke 18, and Mark 10

In none of the 3 accounts do we read “rich young ruler”, by which this passage is so
widely known

In Luke 18:18, we read “a certain ruler”...a ruler in a local synagogue

In Luke 18:23, we read that he was “very rich”

In Matt 19:20, we read him described as “the young man”

We will examine the accounts in Matt 19 and Mark 10 (Luke 18 providing no new
information apart from what I just mentioned in v18 and v23)

Matt 19:16-22

v16 one came and said...Good Master...have eternal life:

From Luke’s account we know this “one” is a ruler, no doubt from a local
synagogue (Jesus is in Perea)

Good Master...Good Teacher, a description that falls far short of Jesus’ identity
(or does it?)

what good thing...what good deed, good work

shall I do that I may have/hold eternal life...“What must I do to save myself?”
salvation-earned-by-good-works

v17a Why call Me good:

Jesus' first response to the young man's is not to answer his question regarding eternal life but to his use of the word "good"

Why do you call Me good?

(Do you not know the Scriptures...have you not read)

None are "good" except God

Ps 14:2-3 The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, *and* seek God. They are all gone aside, they are *all* together become filthy: *there is* none that doeth good, no, not one

Ps 143:1-2 Hear my prayer, O LORD, give ear to my supplications: in thy faithfulness answer me, *and* in thy righteousness. And enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified

1 Kings 8:46 (there is no man than sins not)

Is 64:6

Jer 17:9

In a matter of about 30 years, the Holy Spirit will give a greater revelation of our "goodness"

Rom 3:10-23 "before" saved by grace thru faith

Rom 7:7, 14-19 even "after" saved by grace thru faith

Jesus' statement (sharper than a two-edged sword) is clear:

God is good, only God is good

Man is NOT good

What are the ramifications of Jesus' statement?

1. Shot down and declared False by Jesus Christ is man's belief of man
"I am a good person so God will let me into heaven."

"So-and-so is a good person."

2. Bitter pill for all, who are infected with pride:

We are not good in the assessment of the good God

We have a nature (sin) that is no-good

A no-good person is incapable of anything good because the no-good stains everything

If a no-good person does something good (pleasing to God), it was God working in the "image of God"

A no-good person cannot earn "goodness"

3. The proper use of "good" is when speaking of God, not man

v17b if you will...keep the commandments:

Then, having established the proper usage of “good”, Jesus answers the young man’s question regarding eternal life: Keep the Commandments

What does Jesus mean by “keeping the commandments”?

- Obey ALL the commandments
- Obey ALL the time
- Obey perfectly (Matt 5:48, James 2:10)
- Obey in Spirit, not just in Letter (SoM)

Otherwise, according to the Law, Deut 25:16

For all that do such things, *and* all that do unrighteously, *are* an abomination unto the LORD thy God

v18-19 Which...love thy neighbor:

The rich young ruler does not yet understand the depth or breadth of Jesus’ “keep the commandments” answer

He is Jewish, there are 613 commandments in the Law

So...Which commandments should I keep?

Jesus mentions some of the one ones He personally wrote in tables of stones and gave to Moses on Mount Sinai...

All from Table 2 (govern our relationships with each other),
none from Table 1 (govern our relationship with God)

He mentions Commandments 5, 6, 7, 8, 9

From His perspective, having taught the Spirit of the Law on SoM

Do no murder/unrighteous anger/hate (pain for Self and others)...

ever, until the moment you die

Do not commit adultery/lust (pain for Self and others)...

ever, until the moment you die

Do not steal/covet (pain for Self and others)...

ever, until the moment you die

Do not bear false witness/lie (pain for Self and others)...

ever, until the moment you die

Honor/respect/obey your father and mother...

always, until the moment you die

And the summary (which is not recorded in either Mark or Luke):

Love your neighbor as yourself (quoting Lev 19:18)

(as He did when asked this same question, but as a trap...Luke 10:25-29)

v20 All these things have I kept...what lack I yet:

The young ruler seems to have a high opinion of himself and
a low view (superficial) of the Word of God:
“I have kept those commandments”

But...something is missing and he knows it

He is young, wealthy, moral, religious, a model citizen, influential.

A “good man”...but he knows something is missing:

Self-goodness is not satisfying, is not good enough

Which is why he came to Jesus in the first place

v21 If you will be perfect:

Jesus does not challenge or rebuke the young man for his opinions of himself or
of the Word of God, but He does challenge him on his theology on
salvation (by works/good deeds)

If you will be perfect/complete (same Greek word in Matt 5:48) to enter into
eternal life,

- go sell everything you have
- give to the poor to have real treasure (spiritual, in heaven)
- come here, come to Me again
- follow Me (to eternal life)

Jesus sees the young man's heart

- he loves God
- he wants to be pleasing to God
- he is striving to earn God's pleasure
- he knows something is missing
- he has a really tight grip on his possessions...he trusts his riches

v22 he went away sorrowful:

The rich young ruler walked away from Jesus not willing to “pay the price” of
being perfect/complete...the requirement of holding eternal life
(his request in v16)

Rather than Ps 37:37

Mark the perfect *man*, and behold the upright: for the end of *that* man is
peace

the young man is not at peace and is “marked” as loving his riches more than he
loves God

God is not his strength, his riches are his strength (Ps 52:7)

Ouch!

We get more insight and more teaching in Mark's account

Mark 10:17-24

v17 when He was gone forth into the way:

After teaching about Marriage/Divorce and Little Children, Jesus departs
(Matt 19:15)

As He is going, the one we know as the rich young ruler

- comes running – to overtake or to intercept Jesus
- kneels down to Jesus – in reverence
- asks his question

In Matthew, “may have/hold eternal life”

Here, “may inherit eternal life”

An inheritances comes from a father

An inheritance of eternal life comes from...the Father in heaven

v18 Why call Me good:

Jesus' first point:

Do not be glib with the word “good.”

In reality, it has a very restricted proper usage.

To be clear, Jesus is NOT saying that He is a sinner and not good

Instead, Jesus is deflating the young man's

- opinion of himself – thinks he is a good person
- understanding of salvation – believes he can earn it

If “I am not good” is established in the young man's mind, then he will
realize his understanding of salvation is incorrect also

v19-20 Thou know the commandments:

You know the Commandments (I know who you are)

One commandment is recorded differently – defraud vs steal

Commonplace was the powerful rich stealing from, cheating,
the powerless poor (nothing new under the sun)

All these I have observed:

The young rich ruler who came running to Jesus and knelt down before Him
was...sincere

Jesus did not challenge his sincerity

v21 Jesus beholding him loved him:

Jesus knew this man's heart,

- that he wanted to be pleasing to His Father
- that he desired an inheritance from His Father

and He loved/agape-ed the rich young ruler

One thing you lack:

The young man did not know what was lacking/missing; Jesus did

There is something in his heart that he is holding onto that has had gotten between him and the Father –

- his own “goodness” (indescribably and tragically insufficient)
- his riches

Therefore, Jesus commands the rich young ruler to

- go home
- sell everything, every possession
- distribute the proceeds among the poor in order to have true riches (Prov 28:27a)
- come back to Me
- take up your cross (!)...deny yourself, lose your life/will for Mine
- follow Me

You want to be pleasing to the Father?

Be a part of what the Father is doing...by surrendering of “Self”

Matt 5:3-9

Do as I am doing

Matt 10:38-39

v22 sad at that saying and went away grieved:

Jesus had spoken a hard saying,

- a bitter pill for a moral rich man to swallow, perhaps thinking to himself
 - I never killed anyone, others have
 - I never committed adultery, others have
 - I don't lie, cheat, or steal, others do
 - I honor my parents, others do not
 - I'm a good person, compared to so many others
 - Is not my wealth a sign of God's blessing my life?
 - Why is eternal life not given to me?!
- a truth that is bitter to the taste but with obedience becomes sweet

The rich young ruler came with such hope (v16), he leaves with such sadness

And herein lies another teaching moment for Jesus disciples (us)

v23-24 they that have riches...them that trust in riches:

Jesus' teaching is a hard saying...“How hard”

1. How hard it is for those who have/hold riches (vs Me)

2. How hard it is for them that trust in riches (vs Me)

to enter the kingdom of God

What is the requirement to enter into the kingdom of God?

v15

Thus, Jesus calling his grown men disciples “Children”

Children do not trust in money (of which they have none),
they trust in their parents

Children do not worry about household finances

They just want food, drink, clothes, loving relationships, security...
things their parents know they need

Matt 6:19-34 v32-33

Ps 37:39-40

Children are not corrupted by “filthy lucre” that cannot save anyone from eternal
death and cannot purchase eternal life

Ps 49:6-9 riches cannot redeem anyone from death

1 Tim 6:6-12 love of money, erred from the faith

Prov 30:7-9 neither poverty (steal) nor riches (deny)

Prov 11:28a he that trusts in his riches shall fall

Luke 12:15 man's life consists not of the things he possesses

God places no value on money – it is all His and it is all temporary

God places the highest value on the human heart – few are His, He wants
them all...and all are for all eternity

Children are not children because they earned the title/position

They are children because they have been begotten

John 1:12-13

John 3:3-8

Children do not earn their father's pleasure, they have their father's pleasure

The “Rules of the House” do not “make” the children, they protect the children

Rom 4

Gal 3:6-26

Children do not let money...or anything...get between them and their parents

Children lift high their Father's name!

3 Lessons

1. Salvation

A gift of God, NOT a work/good deed of man
Eph 2:8-9

2. Sincerity

The rich young ruler was very sincere...and sincerely wrong

Truth is not altered by any sincerely believed error
Sincerely believing a lie will not make the a lie a truth
Sincerity of belief in an error is never pleasing to God, sincerely believing Him does!

Unity apart from the Truth is a false unity and a deception
Likewise, sincerity apart from the Truth gives a false hope and is a deception

3. Surrender

Matt 6:24
Matt 16:24

Surrendering to Jesus Christ is not a superficial thing – it costs everything you have
Everything that gets between us and the Father in heaven must be surrendered to Jesus
(John 14:6b)

The most difficult thing for a follower of Jesus to do is to trust the Lord with “his/her”
finances

Needed is a transformation, a renewing of the mind (by the wisdom of God, the Word)
regarding money...to trust the Lord and not money/possessions (all His)

“Children”...be as a little child, be childlike

- Receiving a wonderful gift from the Father (salvation)
- Sincerely believing the Father
- Lay down the love of money and the cares of this world...trust the Lord of all