

The Rich Young Ruler – Grieved by the Gospel

Mark 10:17-22

Reading: Romans 5:1-11

Bethany Baptist Church

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...pause for recording...

We have been thinking about the *Great Commission* lately (& *Great Commission Encounters*)...

1. Admittedly, evangelism can be kind of *daunting* for many of us.
2. We always assume that people in our culture will *resist* our efforts to share our faith.
3. But just *imagine* having an encounter like this:
 - a. You're *leaving your house*. Lot's on your mind...
 - b. Suddenly some *well-dressed guy*, all *out of breath*, comes *running up*,
 - c. *Skids* to a stop.
 - d. *Sticks out* his hand.
 - e. And breathlessly *begs*: "*I know you're a good Christian: what do I have to do to get to Heaven!?!*"
 - e. "*Please tell me....now!*"
4. **What would you tell him?**

Let's turn together to **Mark 10:17-31** (*today: 17-22*).

1. Our text this morning begins *Jesus' encounter with an affluent & influential young Jew*. The lessons that come out of this fascinating story continue on thru v **31**.
2. It's really a story about the same message that lay at the heart of all *Jesus' teachings*: ever since chapter 1! The true meaning of the **Gospel of the Kingdom**, and *repentance & faith*.

3. What happens when the *Religion of Works* meets the *Gospel of Grace*?
 - a. The *religion of I can!* (v. 17)
 - b. The *reality of No you can't!* (v. 18-21)
 - c. The *response of I just won't...* (v. 22)

Pray

A. The religion of *I can!* (v. 17, 20)

1. The Gospels indicate that as Jesus was leaving that house in Perea where He had blessed those children, one by one, He was interrupted one more time.
 - a. Christ was starting back out on *His journey to the Cross* – we are now just a *few weeks* away from the Crucifixion.
 - i. He'll soon *enter Judea*, passing through *Jericho*.
 - ii. And *arrive in Jerusalem* in time for His last Passover.
 - b. As Jesus set out, leading His disciples, *one young man*, eager & earnest, rushed up and *fell to his knees*.
 - i. He *had* to talk to this amazing Teacher!
 - ii. The Greek text indicates he was *by himself*.
 - iii. **Matthew 19** tells us he was *young* (though not as young, of course, as all those children).
 - iv. **Luke 18** indicates he was a *ruler* – maybe *too young* to be a *synagogue ruler*, but undoubtedly a man of *affluence & influence*.
 - c. The **Rich Young Ruler** was *burning* to talk to this Master from Galilee, before it was too late!
 - *“Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”*

2. So far, so good! Or, at least this all looks good on the outside.
 - a. He's so **eager**: *he runs up to Jesus.*
 - b. He's so **reverent**: *he kneels before the Teacher.*
 - i. It was very unusual to *kneel* before a rabbi. As influential & religious as the Rich Young Ruler was, he understood that Jesus was his superior.
 - ii. And his greeting is formal, and filled w/ respect: *Good Master!*
 - c. He's got a **great goal**: *how can I inherit eternal life?*
 - d. He's come to *the right place!*
 - Our young friend has figured out, *Jesus has the answer....*
3. But beloved, this young man, no doubt *sincere* in some sense of the word, had something *fundamentally wrong* on the inside.
 - e. His religion was a religion of dead works.
 - i. *What can I do to inherit eternal life?*
 - ii. We're going to find out in just a few minutes (v. 20), that the Rich Young Ruler was *all about doing!*
 - b. His religion of works was *deeply rooted in the barren soil of bad theology*: he didn't really understand **true good**, and he didn't really understand **Jesus** (we're about to *dig deeper* into that in vv. 18-21).

Beloved, this is the confident but flawed religion of "I can!" Just tell me what to do to get to heaven, I'll do! (Just look at all I've done, already...)

**B. But the reality is—*You can't! You can't* earn eternal life.
(vv. 18-21)**

1. *Are you surprised by these first words out of Jesus mouth?*
 - a. *“Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.”*
 - b. Maybe that sounds abrupt, but Jesus, who knows the hearts of all men, was making an *immediate moral diagnosis!*
 - i. The Lord quickly challenged the Rich Young Ruler’s *casual & work’s- based* understanding of *good*.
 - God alone is the standard of *good*, our *good works* can’t become that measure.
 - ii. Jesus was also leading him towards a true understand of the *Good Teacher’s* real identity: God alone is *good*, Jesus **indeed** was *good*, but don’t say that all *so casually*: because that all adds up to an escapable conclusion – **Jesus is God!**
 - *And you won’t inherit eternal life, if you don’t know that!* (pause)
2. *A skillful doctor uses a variety of diagnostic tools & tests.*
 - a. Some are *simple*, some much more *complicated*...
 - b. Some are pretty *painless*, some we *don’t even like to think about!*
 - c. But when the right test is *administered w/ skill*, it tells us the *truth* about our condition.
 - d. The news isn’t always *pleasant*...but we *need to know the truth*.

3. The *Great Physician* began to administer a probing spiritual test.
 - a. Do you see *what it was*? (Read v. 19)
 - b. This eager guy believed that “*Law Righteousness*” was the key to Heaven.
 - c. So Jesus began to weigh him with the **Law**. The Lord went immediately to the *so-called* “**Second Table of the Law**,” those commandments that deal with our relationships.
 - i. *Do not murder* – the 6th commandment (Ex 20:13).
 - ii. *Do not commit adultery* – the 7th commandment (20:14)
 - iii. *Do not steal* – the 8th commandment (20:15).
 - iv. *Do not bear false testimony* – the 9th (20:16).
 - v. *Do not defraud* – here is a **puzzle!** Is this in the 10 Commandments? Doesn’t seem to be at first.... But some commentators suggest, and I think our context bears out, that Jesus was probably *interpreting & applying* the 10th commandment: *Do not covet* (20:17).
 - vi. *Honor your Father & Mother* – the 5th comm. (20:5).
4. What was the young man thinking as he listened to Jesus’ recitation of the Law? (**Read v. 20**)
 - a. Was he *excited? Proud...? Maybe disappointed?*
 - **“*You mean that’s it? I’m already doing all this!*”**
 - b. You know, the Bible admits that it *is* possible to maintain an *external semblance* of Law-works obedience.

...Phil 3:6... *Paul*

- c. In **Phil 3:6**, Paul said he lived like that, *before* Christ delivered him! “...*as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless!*”
- d. But external obedience *isn't all there is...* And not even the Rich Young Ruler was really *doing* all the Law required.
- Here's why: genuine righteousness is a *heart issue, first.*
4. There are places in the Gospel of Mark where we watch as Jesus *looks intently* at people around Him, searching their hearts. *Seeing if they understand what He's saying.*
- a. Jesus *looked intently* at the Rich Young Ruler. (Mk)
- b. εμ βλεπ ω – *fix one's gaze upon*
5. And Jesus loved Him (Mk only). Mark writes with that Greek verb used to communicate *God's love*: α γα πα ω.
- Here is **hope**: *Jesus loves sinners.*
 - Loves them enough to *tell them the truth.*
6. Then Jesus *applied the Law* one more time, and probed deep into this confident young man's **sinful, selfish heart!**
- a. What is the **first** commandment of the *Decalogue*?
Ex 20:3
- You shall have no other gods before Me.* No other gods...
- b. Read v. 21 *quote only.* Jesus just *expanded & applied* the *first* commandment.
- c. **The Rich Young Ruler had another god.** Riches.
Jesus was finally making his sin plain to his conscience.

7. D. Edmond Hiebert explains that Jesus is giving the man a *double dose remedy* to turn him from his *worship of the false god of wealth*:
- a. First dose: remove the hindrance (*three imperatives*): ***go..., sell..., give...*** Isn't this a call for *repentance*?
 - b. Second dose: start a new life: *come, follow Me*.
"follow Me" – **present** tense (current & continuous) =
make this the mark of your lifestyle
 - c. Doesn't this sound like the Gospel Jesus preached to the crowds in **Mark 8:34**? And doesn't it sound like the reason for the Gospel Jesus gave in **8:35-37**? (*wcb-read*)
 - It seems to me that as He spoke, Jesus was applying *the Gospel of repentance & faith* to this young man.

Car guys: do you know what a *bondo-mobile* is? Or a *twenty-foot car*?

Let's think again about that Rich Young Ruler, and who *he* thought he was, and what he *looked* like to his neighbors:

Beloved, you can't live good enough to go to heaven. If you have a loved one who looks good on the outside, but doesn't seem to ***get it*** on the inside, you aren't doing them a favor by ignoring the heart issues.

The reality is, no matter how good it looks, you can't earn eternal life!

C. The response of *I won't...* (*don't read v. 22*)

1. The eager *seeker*, his inclination towards *religion*, Jesus' Himself masterful use of the *Law* to lovingly apply the ***Gospel***.
 - a. *It doesn't get any better than this!*
 - b. Except....*no one got saved!* (**Read v. 22**)
2. The **Rich Young Ruler** didn't say a word.
 - a. His *shocked face clouded over* w/disappointment (Mark's vocabulary in v. 22 only occurs one other time in the NT, to picture the *gloomy cast of a stormy sky*).
 - b. He had *run up* to Jesus, so full of *questions & confidence*.
 - c. He *went away* grieving...***grieved by the Gospel***.
 - d. Here's why (v. 22): *He was rich*. His property was His god. And Jesus demanded He turn His back on his *idolatry*.
3. Last week we read that the Kingdom of God is *populated* by those who are a lot like **children**: *trusting & empty handed*.
 - a. Completely *empty-handed* except their faith.
 - b. Completely *dependent* on the love of Christ.
 - c. And Jesus *blesses* them with eternal life.
4. In all three Synoptic Gospel (M, M, L), our story of the **Rich Young Ruler** follows *immediately after* that record of the **Children's Blessing**.
 - What a *contrast* these back-to-back accounts give us! **Kids** / An affluent & eager **seeker**.
 - Which one received *Christ's blessing*?

***When Jesus calls, some people will give up anything to come to Him...
...and some people just won't.***

- D. There is *more to learn* from the **Rich Young Ruler**. Jesus will turn next to His amazed disciples with one of the *hardest sayings* in the Gospels, and then follow it with the promise of *eternal reward*.
1. But let's reflect right now on the meaning of Jesus' encounter on that road in Perea: ***you aren't good enough to earn eternal life.***
 2. That news *turned away* the Rich Young Ruler.
 4. But it doesn't have to be the *end* of the *your* story! Listen carefully to these "*Eternal Life*" truths from the pages of your **NT**:
 - a. ***Romans 5:1*** – *Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*
 - b. ***Romans 5:6*** – *For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.*
 - c. ***Romans 5:8*** - *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*
 - d. ***Romans 5:9*** - *Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.*
 - e. ***Romans 5:10*** – *For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.*

Do you think you're *good enough*? Think *again*...and think *carefully*!

Or better, could ***this*** be you: *helpless, ungodly, sinner, under wrath, enemy*...

Then run to Jesus for this...*justified, at peace, atoned for, delivered, reconciled, saved by Jesus' death, & resurrection to life. Amen!*

...pray...