

The Disciple and their money. Matthew 19:16-30

This passage is a troubling one. It was troubling for the disciples, for the wealthy young ruler, and for us. It becomes clear that Christ does not want any misconception about what following him entails. It seems too radical, too abrupt, too ... well, too immoderate to suit our tastes. But it's easy to miss the truth when it is delivered in moderation. The truth, however, can be unmistakable when delivered unvarnished, undiluted. And that kind of powerful truth-telling Jesus is known for. Matthew places this event in the midst of a series of incidents and parables designed to indicate the character of discipleship.

This impressive young man had made many “right” choices in his life and he was obviously from a successful, affluent family. I imagine he was admired and highly respected as a young man of both character and position. He realized that his wealth and influence came with responsibility and he seemed to embrace that. And yet, something was still missing... despite all that he was and had, he inherently knew that he needed to be saved. His stuff wasn't enough! He also recognized that there was something extraordinary about the authority and teachings of Jesus.

1. The young man seems to have a lot going for him in life.

Why then do you think he asks Jesus the question about inheriting eternal life?

2. He claims to have kept the commandments since he was a boy.

Is this true do you think?

What commandments do you think he may not have kept?

Note that the commandments Jesus lists for him are the latter 6 that deal with interpersonal relationships. Why might Jesus have not bothered to raise the ones that dealt with right practice towards God but instead focused upon the relational ones?

3. Why do you think Jesus asks him to sell everything he has and give to the poor?

What was that conversation all about? Jesus was extending an invitation to this man to embark on a “God-adventure” with Him. It was up to the man to choose what he would do. As much as he loved God, as much as he obeyed the law, he was entangled in and limited by his possessions. Jesus wanted to give him a new identity – a new name. He was inviting him to come along with Him into a life of walking in God's plans and God's purposes where God leads and supplies all that is needed. That's an exciting invitation but a frightening one. It's an invitation that is extended to every true believer. You see, God isn't just out to touch our hearts and forgive our sins. He wants to CHANGE us. Then he wants to USE us. The more we are willing to be changed, the more He is able to use us. I wonder what might have happened if the rich young ruler had said “yes.” I wonder how many times he asked himself that question over the years

4. Can you think of anything that Jesus might want you to give up to follow him.

We should not read into Jesus challenge to the young man that wealth is something inherently evil. Wealth, rightly used, is seen as a blessing from God. It should be the opportunity for service rather than the bringer of guilt. Yet the temptations that come with it are great. Therefore the warnings are great.

5. If the rich young ruler were to do as Jesus suggests how do you think his life would change?

What would he lose and what would he gain?

6. Jesus says it is very hard for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Why do you think this is?

7. Jesus assures his disciples that they will be compensated for everything they have given up to follow him.

What do you think he means when he talks about receiving many times as much in this age?