

INTRODUCTION

- One of the interesting ways in which to study Scripture, particularly the life of Christ, is to look at how he dealt with different kinds of people. It is noticeable that he doesn't deal with people in a single way (canned evangelism), but views them as individuals, and deals with them according to their circumstances.
- We can learn much from this, and see how best to deal with certain kinds of people and certain situations.
- **[parallel passages found in : Matthew 19:16-20:16; Mark 10:17-31; & Luke 18:18-30]**

EXPOSITION

- Let's look together at several things we learn about this man

I. HE WAS A RULER (v.18)

- Gk. archone = leader, official, on in authority. He is likely not Pharisee nor the leader of a synagogue (as noted in other places), but civic leader. This indicates that he was likely well esteemed in the community, and thought of as a good man

II. HE WAS VERY RICH (v.23)

- Gk. plousios = wealthy, well-to-do. This word by itself indicates being rich, but then the word is added Gk. sphodra = adv. very much, greatly. He wasn't just rich, he was exceedingly so. He is one who doesn't have financial cares, and isn't coming for any kind of poverty driven motive.

III. HE WAS YOUNG (Mt19:20, 22)

- Gk. neaniskos = beyond the age of puberty; between 24 and 40 years old. He was a man in the prime of his life, and is probably in fine health seeing he asks for no healing. Yet there is a sense in which he is sober minded enough to realize that this won't last forever.

IV. HE WAS SPIRITUALLY ZEALOUS (Mk10:17)

- Gk. prostecko = run to someone as a destination. This is something a "dignified" person rarely did, and his doing so indicates a real zeal. According to Mk 10:20, he does this while Jesus is in the way or on the road, indicating a public setting. The man openly expresses his zeal before others.

V. HE WAS RESPECTFUL (Mk10:17)

- Gk. gonupeteo = to kneel down before in reverence or supplication. He does not come with the haughtiness of other leaders Jesus has had contact with, but comes with a self-effacing respect and submission to what Jesus is teaching.

VI. HE HAD A HIGH VIEW OF JESUS (v.18)

- Good teacher = the man recognized Jesus as a respected teacher, not with the false flattery of a Pharisee. He believed Jesus had something, some instruction that he had not yet received but needed.

VII. HE WAS SPIRITUALLY INQUISITIVE (v.18)

- His question concerns how to inherit eternal life. He recognizes that with all that he has in his riches, something is missing. He has life in abundance, but a day is coming when there will be a resurrection from the dead. He has been rightly taught by the more conservative religious leaders that there is life everlasting, just as there is everlasting death.
- He asks what shall I do. He has a sense of responsibility. He wants it, and is willing to work for it. He has been taught this all his life, that inheritance comes by work, and surely so does eternal life.
- Notice he doesn't ask "how" do I inherit eternal life, but "what shall I DO." This is the reason for Jesus' particular answer. The Bible teaches that eternal life is a gift of God's free grace. It cannot be earned or deserved, and no amount of human effort can merit it.
- But to lead him to that point, Jesus' directs him to the law, especially his duty toward men. If by works you are trying to merit salvation, then you already know what to do.: keep the law. If you do this, you will live.

VIII. HE WAS MORAL (v.21)

- The man's response is plain: All these things I have kept from my youth. He has received these commands, and has sought to keep them, and as he examines himself, he doesn't see any gross violation. The phrase from my youth possibly refers to the time he became a "son of the law".
- He was probably telling the truth. He had not committed adultery, murdered, stolen, born false witness in court, and honored parents. Notice Jesus doesn't refute this statement at this point
- Mt19:20 tells us that at that point he adds a question: What do I still lack? Notwithstanding his works, he still wasn't confident that he had eternal life. He wants another command from Jesus that might give him peace and confidence.

IX. HE WAS LOVED (Mk10:21)

- What we are told in Mark paints a very precious picture. Jesus looks at him, and loves him. Jesus doesn't respond in anger or frustration. He doesn't blast him because of his self-righteousness. What Jesus says is out of love and concern toward him, in sincere desire that he knows what is necessary to receive eternal life
- Jesus didn't compromise; wasn't persuaded by his success, wealth, or respond with sentiment to his question.
- At this point I pause to notice that a man so far described would be a prime candidate for a quick prayer and announcement that he is a Christian. Some would perhaps say he is already saved. Jesus doesn't allow the man's wealth, influence, sincerity, or sentiment stand in the way of telling him what is necessary for him.
- Notwithstanding all of these good qualities, there was a serious problem...

X. HE WAS LOST

- What I mean is that he did not have eternal life, and after Jesus instructs him still didn't have it. This is for at least four reasons.

1.) He had an incomplete view of Jesus

- He calls Him good teacher, which seems good at first. But this isn't enough. When Jesus instructs him what eternal life for him means, the man will reject that counsel. He sees Jesus as a good teacher, but not as infallible and having the words of life. He simply doesn't accept Jesus direction. It will be too radical, and cost too much.
- Excursus: Jesus' response to the man's statement of goodness to him is controversial. Some people claim that it is a statement by Jesus that He isn't God. But note, He doesn't say "I am not good", but "WHY do you call me good?"
- In other words, What is your purpose?
- What He says next is a statement: there is none good but God. There is no denial about Himself, but a probing question and a statement about God alone being good. We must notice that the Bible uses the term for men (Ps112:5; Pr14:14; Lk6:45; Act11:24). What Jesus means by this is in an absolute sense not is perfectly good but God. Jesus is asking "Is this what you are saying about me?"

2.) A shallow view of goodness

- He viewed Himself, as measured by God's law, as able to do good works that were meritorious. He had not yet come to the place where he realized that a free gift of mercy was needed, but is looking for more good works. He didn't realize the spiritual nature of the law, and that it also about the heart (where Jesus will take him). He responded "all these things I have done"; probably true outwardly, but what about as they applied to the heart?
- By good training and upbringing he had been restrained from doing gross sin; but had he never had hatred in his heart? Had he never had unspoken words of dishonor toward his parents? Had he never lusted after a woman?
- The law was to show him his need for forgiveness and mercy, but instead it was formalized and externalized

3.) An inseparable love for the things of this world

- Jesus sees his heart, and deals with him individually(and differently than Zacchaeus). There was an idol in his heart, and that was his earthly treasures. He was prosperous and blessed; but he trusted in them for his happiness. He could not do without them. It is thought by some that Jesus doesn't deal with his relationship to God, but here He does just that.
- It is true, the man needs something else, but it isn't obedience to another commandment (even this one); it is the complete abandonment of everything he cherishes, and embracing of that which is greater...

4.) An unwillingness to treasure Christ above all

- Jesus says come, and follow me, and at that period in history it was meant literally. He was to leave everything behind to follow Christ as he goes to Jerusalem. But the man will not, and does not; this is more than he expected. He was hoping for peace and eternal life through the keeping of more commands, more morality, more religion, and instead he is told to turn from his greatest pleasures, trusts, and joys to follow Christ
- His response was that he became very sorrowful. Gk. perilupos = deeply distressed, very sad. This same term is used for Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane as He prepared for the cross. This is in stark contrast to how he first came.
- The reason for his sorrow is that he was very rich. He saw two choices: abandon everything he loved and trusted in and gain eternal life in following Jesus, or abandon eternal life for his stuff.
- We see from this the Lord's sovereign right to call those who would follow him to do so under whatever conditions He chooses.

APPLICATION

- We see the exclusive terms of inheriting eternal life: the insufficiency of human works and merit. What do you think of your works? Treasuring all that Christ is, and all that Christ has done. Have you received eternal life on those terms?