

Young, Restless, and Rich

Luke 18:18-30; Coast Community Church; Pastor Earl Miles; 7-7-19

The Text

¹⁸ A ruler questioned Him, saying, “Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” ¹⁹ And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone. ²⁰ You know the commandments, ‘DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, DO NOT MURDER, DO NOT STEAL, DO NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.’” ²¹ And he said, “All these things I have kept from *my* youth.” ²² When Jesus heard *this*, He said to him, “One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.” ²³ But when he had heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich. ²⁴ And Jesus looked at him and said, “How hard it is for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” ²⁶ They who heard it said, “Then who can be saved?” ²⁷ But He said, “The things that are impossible with people are possible with God.” ²⁸ Peter said, “Behold, we have left our own *homes* and followed You.” ²⁹ And He said to them, “Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, ³⁰ who will not receive many times as much at this time and in the age to come, eternal life.” – Luke 18:18-30

Also Mark 10:17-31; Matthew 19:16-30

Introduction

If you could have a Q&A session with God, what would you ask?

Would you ask God, ‘What is the most important question I need to ask You?’

Would you ask God, ‘Where am I terribly wrong in my thinking even though I’m thoroughly convinced that I’m right?’

In this passage, we can see:

- The Requirement of Perfection
- The Illusion of Righteousness
- The Impossibility of Salvation
- The Reward of Following Christ

1. The Requirement of Perfection

‘The Perfect Story: There was a perfect man who met a perfect woman. After a perfect courtship, they had a perfect wedding. Their life together was, of course, perfect. One snowy, stormy Christmas Eve this perfect couple was driving along a winding road when they noticed someone at the roadside in distress. Being the perfect couple, they stopped to help. There stood Santa Claus with a huge bundle of toys. Not wanting to disappoint any

children on the eve of Christmas, the perfect couple loaded Santa and his toys into their vehicle. Soon they were driving along delivering the toys. Unfortunately, the driving conditions deteriorated and the perfect couple and Santa Claus had an accident. Only one of them survived the accident. Who was the survivor?

‘Answer: The perfect woman. She's the only one that really existed in the first place. Everyone knows there is no Santa Claus and there is no such thing as a perfect man.

Question #1

¹⁸ *A ruler questioned Him, saying, “Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”*

This story appears in all three gospels as an explanation of what it means to have faith in Jesus as a ‘little child.’ How does this relate to being a little child? How does this relate to being a part of the kingdom?

A ‘ruler’ (general term for a Jewish or Roman official of some kind; possibly the ruler of the local synagogue) comes to Jesus with some flattery since Rabbis were not called ‘good teacher.’

We are inclined to do things. But there are things that call us to do what is a kind of ‘not doing.’ Beds and recliners and couches do this. They call us do what is a kind of ‘not doing.’

He was asking the right question. And the word for ‘question’ carries the idea of ‘accosting’ someone or asking them in a way that is passionate and demanding.

He was coming to right Teacher. Many unbelievers see Jesus as a ‘Good Teacher’ without bowing to Him as Lord and Savior.

‘Good’ means beneficial. He is calling Jesus a ‘beneficial’ teacher and wants to know what ‘beneficial’ thing he can do for others in order to have eternal life. He doesn’t necessarily want to be ‘good,’ but rather, he wants to do ‘good.’

But his assumptions were all wrong. He assumed that there was something he had to achieve in order to have eternal life (‘what good thing shall I do’ – Matthew 19:16). He wanted to know how tall he had to be in order to ride the ride at Disneyland. The problem isn’t that there isn’t a height requirement for the kingdom, but that we can’t add a single cubit to our height.

The Philippian jailer asked the same question. The people on Pentecost asked the same question.

The same answer is given every time (though in different words): the doing you must do is a kind of ‘not doing’ anything at all (except through the substitution of Another).

‘Eternal’ life could simply be understood by this man as ‘everlasting’ or life without end. It does not necessarily imply an understanding of a certain quality of life in fellowship with God. In this

context, this man might be asking, ‘How can I continue to enjoy what I’m enjoying now forever and forever?’

The word ‘inherit’ means to ‘receive by lot’ (through birthright or right action) carries the idea of having a ‘right of inheritance’ so that it may imply, ‘How can I earn or obligate God to give me everlasting life?’, although this may not have been at the forefront of his thinking.

Answer #1

¹⁹ And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.

This question (with a variation in Matthew 19:17 – ‘why are you asking Me about what is good?’) and clarifying statement is the answer (with an addition in Matthew 19:17 – ‘if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments’). ‘Nothing’ is the answer, because only the good deserve eternal life. And no one is good.

He is questioning his definition of good.

He is questioning his understanding of Jesus. If Jesus is the ‘Good Teacher’ and only God is ‘good’ then the ruler needs to reflect on whether he actually believes what he just said and understands the true implications of it.

There is relative good and absolute good. We can identify people who are relatively good; compared to really evil people. But when we are talking about good in the sense of perfection and worthiness of worship or merit or reward, then there is only One in this category.

Thus, eternal life would be life in the presence of One who is perfectly good; so good that it must destroy all that is not good!

²⁰ You know the commandments, ‘DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, DO NOT MURDER, DO NOT STEAL, DO NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.’”

This statement is evidence of the truth of what has just been said (this statement follows a question in Matthew 19:18: ‘which ones?’). Jesus mentions a half of the Ten Commandments and a few of the many commandments in order to illustrate what is required, while not denying that all of the commandments must be kept. This list is sufficient to show a person that he hasn’t even begun to keep all the commandments.

God’s Word reveals God’s standard for good which is based on His character as the Supreme Good.

If God is Good, then His Law is good and good for us!

The Lord Jesus gives him the law in order to expose his sin (Romans 3:20: and to lead him to Christ! (Galatians 3:24)

These five commandments are part of the ten commandments and focus on our relationship with other people.

Why did Jesus just include commandments relating to the second table of the Ten Commandments and to our relationship to other people? Possibly, because if we aren't loving people then we know that we aren't loving God! (1 John 4:20)

There is a difference between knowing and doing.

All of these can easily be understood in outward or external terms. That's why the Lord Jesus teaches us the depth of the true meaning of the commandments (Matthew 5:21-48).

We can see from the other accounts that Luke records only a part of the conversation because the ruler asks another question and the Lord Jesus actually says more regarding what he must do. (Matthew 19:17-19; Mark 10:19)

2. The Illusion of Righteousness

‘A businessman well known for his ruthlessness once announced to writer Mark Twain, "Before I die I mean to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. I will climb Mount Sinai and read the 10 Commandments aloud at the top." "I have a better idea," replied Twain. "You could stay in Boston and keep them." - Moody Bible Institute's *Today in the Word*, September, 1991, p. 32.

Question 2

²¹ *And he said, "All these things I have kept from my youth."*

This is a statement with an implied question: what *else* do I have to do? Or so does that mean I'm good and ready?

In another account, the question is clearly asked (Matthew 19:20).

The rabbis actually taught that the Law could be kept in its entirety.

In the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord Jesus expounds on the true depth of meaning for these commandments.

This man is under the illusion that he's obeying when he's not.

Answer #2

²² *When Jesus heard this, He said to him, "One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."*

This may sound like the Lord Jesus is reinforcing the ruler's dependence on his own good works, but this would be a misreading of what He is doing. Actually, it is a practical call to complete trust in Jesus. He is saying, 'Trust in Me!'

Saving faith is not simply a knowledge of certain truths or a belief in certain doctrines, but the entrusting of one's life and future into the hands of the only Savior and Lord! And it is obedience to what He commands that shows that we are trusting Him and by no means earns us any merit.

The Lord Jesus is kind and gracious while being pointed and convicting. It is clear that this was not a means of hindering the ruler or excluding the ruler but a means of loving the ruler (Mark 10:21).

This man lacked everything but the Lord Jesus focuses on one thing: his obedience to God and especially, to the first commandment.

This reminds of the teaching of Jesus that one cannot serve God and money or wealth. (Matthew 6:24)

This commandment was for this particular individual, not for all who follow Christ.

It was intended, in this moment, to expose the fact that he had not even kept the first of the Ten Commandments even though he thought he had kept the others.

The implication of the question is also that if you do not keep the first commandment in the Ten, you cannot and will not keep any of the rest!

The implication of all that the Lord Jesus tells him to do is: trust God for what you need and desire to the point that you obey, whatever the cost.

The other implication is that in trusting Jesus he will have found the way to inherit eternal life.

Eternal life here is defined as 'treasure in heaven.'

Love which is the obedience of faith is pictured here as giving to the poor (not a meritorious thing: see 1 Corinthians 13:3) and living like Jesus lives.

Following Jesus is trusting Him for eternal life.