

“The Rich Young Ruler and the Son of Man” Luke 18:18-34

Please Stand and Open Your Bibles to Luke 18:18-23

We are going to be looking at a story today that is very well known. It is almost repeated verbatim in three of the four gospels with a few unique features that we will see today. Matthew adds a parable at the end and all three have placed it chronologically in the right place. Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem and almost to Jericho on His way to the Triumphant Entry on Palm Sunday. This event deals with a subject that has been the focus of many of the encounters that Luke records between Jesus and the Rulers of the Synagogues, the Scribes, and the Pharisees. They had believed and taught rich people were favored by God and poor people were cursed. Jesus taught them many parables that turned that thought around. Remember a couple of chapters ago we had seen this...

Luke 16:14

Now the Pharisees, who were **lovers of money**, also heard all these things, and they derided Him.

Luke was pointing out one of the things that the Pharisees trusted in. We know that was the point by the way Jesus answered them in the next verse...

Luke 16:15

And He said to them, “You are those who **justify** yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.”

They said, “we are rich so that proves that God is blessing us and receiving us”. Jesus says that is quite the opposite. This will be highlighted some more in what will turn out to be one of the saddest stories in the Bible. Let’s look back at what we just read and point out some things from the other two gospels.

Luke 18:18

Now a certain ruler asked Him, saying, “Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”

Here we find out he is a ruler. We are not told where but can assume it would be one of the synagogues.

Mark 10:17

Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, “Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?”

Because he came running and knelt before Him, we can determine that he was showing the proper respect to an elder rabbi, hence he is young. And being rich is the whole purpose of the story. Matthew adds to the question...

Matthew 19:16

Now behold, one came and said to Him, “Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?”

I do not believe that this Rich Young Ruler was being completely honest. Luke points out he is a ruler and we shared last week every one of them mentioned up to this point in Luke has been to test Jesus. He still wants to believe he can come to God based upon his works as we will see from the outcome. Jesus makes an important notation from his question...

Luke 18:17

So Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God.

Jesus has wisely fit into the question an emphatic statement to get him to reevaluate who He thinks he is talking to. The Bible plainly says in 3 places...

Romans 3:12, Psalm 14:3 & 53:3

“There is none who does good, no, not one.”

That leaves us with one question, “If Jesus is good, who is He?” Something that the ruler should know! He is God. And if no one is good and only God is good is there any good thing that can be done to gain eternal life? NO! This is the main point of the whole story and fits right into the whole theme of Luke’s gospel. Matthew adds a little more context...

Matthew 19:17-18

So He said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.” He said to Him, “Which ones?”

Here we find out that Jesus tells him the truth. If you want to be saved by works, go ahead and keep the commandments. Obviously he wasn’t around during the sermon on the mount or the plain! We need to understand that his question back to Jesus is not an honest one. We are told here in Luke that he is a ruler. That is his job! People came and asked him what the Bible says. But Jesus is gracious towards him and gives him the answer...

Luke 18:20-21

You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not bear false witness,’ ‘Honor your father and your mother.’ ” 21 And he said, “All these things I have kept from my youth.”

The other two gospels say the same exact thing except Matthew adds “Love you neighbor as yourself” and Mark adds “Do not defraud”.

Matthew 19:20

The young man said to Him, “All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?”

Jesus will never hide anything from you even if you ask with the wrong motive. Jesus wants nothing more than for this man to be saved. He wants nothing more than for you to be saved.

Luke 18:22

So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, “You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”

Mark adds Jesus’s heart in this answer...

Mark 10:21

Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, “One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.”

He might have been good on the commandments Jesus quoted. There was one that Jesus didn't quote that was the one he broke...

Exodus 20:17

You shall not covet...

Colossians 3:5

Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

I don't know about you, but I would think eternal life is kind of a big issue. I think if he was honest, he would have sought more guidance from Jesus. Nope he just walks away...

Luke 18:23

But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich.

The other two gospels tell us he went away. Money was too important for him and in that sense, it is his god. I told you it is a sad story!

How Hard It Is!

Luke 18:24-30

Jesus uses this moment to make a statement about riches that is so true. We live in the most prosperous Nation in the world at one of the most prosperous times in history. Even the homeless on the street are considered part of the top 4% of the richest people in the world. What Americans call the level of poverty in this county is luxury in most of the rest of the world. Why is evangelism so hard in this country? It's not hard to guess...

That gives us a clear picture of why the proverbs tell us...

Proverbs 30:7-9

Two things I request of You (Deprive me not before I die):
Remove falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches—feed me with the food allotted to me; Lest I be full and deny You, and say, “Who is the Lord?” or lest I be poor and steal, and profane the name of my God.

Jesus uses a metaphor to emphasize how hard it is. Maybe some have you heard of the myth of the “Needle Gate”. A supposed gate that people would squeeze their camels through to get into the city. This is just a made-up myth that has no truth to it. Metaphors like this were used all throughout ancient Judaism by the Rabbis. No, it is just as He said it. We know they understood it that way. Matthew tells us...

Matthew 19:25

When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, “Who then can be saved?”

Hey, they still have a lot to learn. They still have a lot of false teaching that has to be removed. His answer to them is one you need to commit to memory...

Luke 18:27

But He said, “The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.”

Now you got to love Peter. He is thinking outside the box. Not only does he remind Jesus that they had left all but in Matthew we read...

Matthew 19:27

Then Peter answered and said to Him, “See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?”

We need to understand the running thought that is going through their minds that you need to know. They believe that Jesus is going to Jerusalem to establish the kingdom. This is why we see them arguing who is going to be the greatest. This is why at the Olivet Discourse they show Him the Temple. Peter is still dealing with a lot of pride that will be destroyed at the cross. God needs to break him down before he can build him up. I like Jesus’s answer. He doesn’t rebuke him but tells him the truth. A truth that includes you. These twelve disciples and most of all of their followers would lose everything to follow Jesus. But the return is much better. When you become part of the church you become part of a big family. The truth is we may lose a lot in the cause of Christ, but the gains are so much better than we could imagine. I do need to point out one of the things that Matthew adds...

Matthew 19:28

So Jesus said to them, “Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

This is a special promise for only Peter and the boys. The kingdom will come but just not when you are expecting it. There is still something that has to happen first...

The Reason for His Coming

Luke 18:31-34

We have a little context of this from Mark...

Mark 10:32

Now they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was going before them; and they were amazed. And as they followed they were afraid.

They knew something was coming. They knew the religious leaders wanted to kill Him. They could not quite grasp it all. Jesus tells them what the plan is. But they could not get it. They did not yet understand that Jesus has to die for their sins first. It is the only way that we can be saved.

1 Corinthians 15:1-4

Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I

delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures

It is the mind that Jesus was wanting to be in them that He wants to be in you...

Philippians 2:5-11

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.