

Becoming Childlike and Eternal Life and Riches

Looking into the Face of Jesus
The Life of Christ, 2: Pages 195-205
Manuscript: Lesson Plan 83

Introduction

We have several texts for this lesson. There are two stories, but each appears in all three Synoptic Gospels. The first story is found in Matthew 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16; and Luke 18:15-17. The second story is found in Matthew 19:16-26; Mark 10:17-27; Luke 18:18-27. We will read each story from Mark's account, so please open your Bibles to Mark 10.

What are you lacking when it comes to your service to God? Are you open and honest enough with yourself to answer? This is a difficult question to answer. If Jesus were standing right here before you, what would He say you were lacking? This is exactly what He did in the text we are going to read in this lesson discussing the man we call the "rich young ruler." How difficult will it be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God? Jesus answered this question in Mark 10:23. He looked around and made the statement, "How hard it will be . . ." It is a matter of two words, but it makes a big difference where those two words are located.

In this lesson, Jesus was stopped on His way to Jerusalem twice for two different reasons; but in both cases, He teaches what it takes to enter His kingdom and inherit eternal life.

The Heart of a Child

Let us look at Mark 10:13-16 (read).

We need to remember the culture of the day. Children were not honored back then like they are today. That is why the disciples thought this was a such a bother to Christ. But Jesus wanted them close for several reasons.

Try to picture the scene in your mind. Picture these children in Christ's arms. Picture Him hugging them and praying for them. Picture Him laying hands on them.

Now we see His lesson for the disciples and for us. We must "receive the kingdom of God like a child" to enter it (Mark 10:15). What does it mean to have a heart of a child? A child is trusting, teachable, unassuming, and sincere. If we are to "receive the kingdom of God," we must possess this type of heart.

We are about to meet a man who did not have this type of heart.

The Rich Young Ruler

Let us continue to read from Mark 10:17-27 (read).

This is the story of the rich young ruler. No one verse or text describes him as such. Luke 18:18 tells us he was a ruler. He may have been a member of the Sanhedrin or a ruler of the Synagogue, but we do not know for sure. Matthew 19:20, 22 tells us he was young. All the Gospels say he was rich.

This man had several admirable qualities. He came to Jesus in the right way—to meet Him. He came with the right purpose—how to obtain eternal life. He came to the right place for answers—to Christ. He came at the right time—

any time is the right time (he was young too). We can see he had a good heart because of Mark 10:21. There certainly is a lot to like about this man.

He asked Jesus, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus responded, "No one is good except God alone." Was Jesus saying He was not God? No, He was not. Jesus was actually making sure the young ruler knew He was God. Jesus was trying to instill faith in the man—the kind of faith that would be needed to meet the challenge he would soon be given.

Christ gave an answer in Mark 10:18, 19. He listed several laws from the ten commandments. Jesus was saying to do what the Bible says and keep the commandments. He interestingly did not say to do nothing. He said to do what the Scriptures say! Keeping Jesus' commandments shows our love for Him (John 14:15; 1 John 5:3).

The young ruler wanted to know what else he lacked (Matthew 19:20). Picture the moment here—Christ staring into his eyes and having love in His heart for this young man. Christ responded in Mark 10:21, saying if the young ruler wanted to have treasure in heaven, he had to sell everything he had, give it to the poor, and follow Him. Are we commanded to sell all we have today? It is not required because we do not have examples of this being done by commandment in the early church, only by voluntary consent (Acts 5:3, 4). Let us make sure we understand why Christ asked the young ruler to sell all he had.

It seemed that Christ was asking him to become a full-time disciple—"come follow me." Christ knew his heart. He knew what was keeping this man from His kingdom.

What did he lack? "Give up everything and follow Me" (see Matthew 4:18-22; Luke 5:11, 27, 28). Complete dedication is a prerequisite for any disciple. Next, we notice the ruler's response. He left sorrowful (Mark 10:22). Why? Because he had great possessions. He wanted to have eternal life, but not at the price Christ was requesting. This sounds like so many people today who want heaven, but do not want to give up anything.

We also see Christ's teaching (Mark 10:23-27). Again, how hard will it be for those with wealth to enter the kingdom of God? It will be impossible—easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for that to happen (Mark 10:25). The apostles wondered who then could be saved. The Jews thought wealth meant you were in a positive favor with God and that God must be blessing you. The only way a rich man can enter the kingdom of God is if he/she will allow God to touch their heart. The only way that camel can get through the eye of a needle is through God. It will be impossible without Him.

What lessons can we learn from this story? There are several. We can do a lot of things right and still be lacking one thing that could keep us out of heaven. What must you do to inherit eternal life? You must follow the Bible. You must obey Christ's commandments.

Are you willing to pay the price to be Christ's disciple? Are you allowing a heart of covetousness to keep you from being all God wants you to be? Are you going to leave sorrowful, or are you going to allow God to get you through the eye of the needle?

Conclusion
Again, the big question for you today is "What are you lacking?" Is your heart like the rich young ruler or like a heart of a child? When you leave here, know that you are not lacking anything to inherit eternal.

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