

## Review

This morning, we're going to cover a lot of ground in the book of Matthew, because I think it's important that we keep the text in its context. Jesus is in the southeast of Israel, in the region of Judea beyond the Jordan, when a rich young man comes running up and kneels before Him (Mark 10:17)...

### **19:16 What Good Thing Shall I Do?**

This young man had been considering eternal life. And so he asked Jesus what "good thing" he should do to inherit eternal life.

### **19:17-19 Keep The Commandments**

Jesus named off numbers five through ten of the Ten Commandments (Exo. 20:12-17), knowing that the man believed he'd been properly following them. But in spite of all his religious observances, he knew that he was still lacking.

### **19:20-23 Sell Your Possessions**

To demonstrate what the man was still lacking, Jesus said,

**Luke 18:22 ..."Sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."**

The man was grieved and left. He didn't mind working to inherit eternal life, but to give up his wealth? That was more than he'd bargained for!

Jesus' comment as he left was, "It is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven." Why? Is God opposed to wealth? No, He is opposed to the competition that wealth is in a man's heart.

You see, Jesus' instruction that the man sell all he had, give to the poor, and then follow Him was to demonstrate that although he'd kept commandments five through ten, he'd failed at number one: "You shall have no other gods before me" (Exo. 20:3). The man's wealth had priority over eternal life with God.

Through Jesus' simple statement, He was able to show the man

that eternal life would continue to be outside of his grasp until God was put above his riches.

Everything the man had earned in life must be sacrificed. He must watch as people who did nothing to earn or deserve His wealth received it for free. Until he learned that lesson, he wouldn't be complete. Until his priorities were rearranged and God had first place in his heart, he couldn't inherit eternal life.

This is difficult concept for most people to understand, since most of us don't consider ourselves to be rich. But put it in a different perspective for a moment:

- What if God told you to give up your career, and go pick strawberries in the fields?

- What if Jesus said you had to give up golfing and volunteer at the homeless shelter instead?

- What if the Lord commanded that you had to give up a relationship and be single for the rest of your life?

- What if He told you to drop out of college and make minimum wage for the rest of your life?

- What if He instructed you to sell your house and live on the streets of Mexico City?

- What if He said that the plans you've made for the rest of your life must be cancelled?

You see, with this perspective, we can understand perfectly why the man walked away grieving - because we have our own gods, too.

We try to console ourselves by thinking, "But God would never require me to give up such important things." No? Jesus said very clearly,

**Luke 14:33 "So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions."**

Do you consider that everything you have still belongs to you? If so, then you are a likely candidate for being told to give up everything. Is there anything that you're afraid God would require you to give up? Then that's probably the exact thing He will require of you.

We absolutely must live with the attitude that Paul had:

**Phil. 3:7-8 But whatever things were gain to me, those things**

**I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ,**

The word "loss" that Paul uses means "damaged." It is something that you possessed but then lost violently, or through difficulty or hardship. Paul counted everything that he'd lost as "rubbish," which is the word "SKOO-bal-on." That is Greek for anything rotten or decaying. It is also the word for "excrement."

True faith and discipleship means always being willing to forsake everything that we've gained, everything that we think of as valuable. Remember:

- Abraham prayed for years for a son. But when he finally got Him, God commanded that he sacrifice Him on Mount Moriah (Gen. 22). Was there anything that Abraham would keep from God?

- Philip had started a hugely successful evangelism ministry in Samaria, but was directed by an angel to leave and go to a lonely desert road (Acts 8). Was there any ministry that Philip was unwilling to do?

What might God ask you to give up that makes you afraid?

### **19:24-26 With People It Is Impossible**

There are Israeli tour guides who will tell you that "the eye of a needle" was a small gate in the Jerusalem wall, which was difficult to get a camel through. But Jesus clearly says that his figure of speech is both literal and impossible. A camel cannot go through the eye of a needle, nor it is possible for people to be saved apart from God.

**Acts 16:31 ..."Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved..."**

**Acts 4:12 "...there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."**

### **19:27-30 We Have Left Everything**

Watching the rich man walk away, unwilling to part with his worldly empire, caused Simon Peter to point out that they had left everything. He and his brother Andrew had abandoned the family fishing business, just as James and John had. Matthew had walked away from the riches of the tax collection table. They'd left the security of their lives to follow after Jesus. What could they then expect to inherit, seeing as how they'd left everything and followed Jesus?

Jesus reassures them that they would have a place of prominence and reward, just as any who leave behind the comforts and blessings of the world for His name.

But He also gives them a warning: "Many who are first will be last; and the last, first." What does He mean? He is about to explain.

### **20:1-16 The Last First, The First Last**

Jesus gave this parable to Peter and the other apostles so that they won't be surprised when the rewards are being passed out.

You could almost synopsize this as Jesus saying, "Peter, you're going to have to come to grips with the fact that the eternal life you're inheriting will be the same one that others will get, even though they will not have had the years of following that you have. You have forsaken your family business, and will ultimately die for following Me. But don't get bent out of shape when you see people who didn't sacrifice as long or as much as you receiving the same reward of eternal life."