

# "THE RICH YOUNG RULER"

## Mark 10:17-27

If God divided the world into two camps—good people and bad people—which one would you be in? Most of us would put ourselves in the good camp.

- **We love our family.**
- **We go to church quite often.**
- **We're nice to people.**
- **We give some money to the church.**
- **We obey the law** (*We hardly ever speed*).
- **We recycle plastic items.**
- **We don't torch Tesla dealerships.**
- **We do some volunteer work occasionally.**

Surely good, decent people like us will be welcomed into the kingdom of God and enjoy eternity in heaven. The story we're going to dive into today is found in three of the gospels—*Matthew, Mark, and Luke*. So, it must be really important. I need to tip

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you off. This intriguing story might make you squirm in your seat. Be open to what the Holy Spirit wants to do in your life today!

**Mark 10:17...As He was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"**

Here's the context. Jesus was making His way to Jerusalem for the final time (10:32-34). If we piece together what Matthew, Mark, and Luke want us to know about this man, we discover that he was a very wealthy ruler (religious or civil). He was an eager, super-achieving, confident, get-er-done kind of guy. *Surely this was the kind of man Jesus was looking for to build out His leadership team.*

This young man had the basic "DNA" of spiritual life. Maybe he had heard Jesus teach and even witnessed one or more of His miracles. However, deep in his heart he sensed that something was missing from his life. He had hit a wall in his spiritual life. Throwing caution to the wind...

- **He ran up to Jesus.** Middle Eastern men of status did not run because it was considered undignified, even shameful.
- **He knelt before Jesus.** He assumed this posture before the One whom the religious leaders had marked for death.
- **He addressed Jesus respectfully.** He called Him "Good Teacher."

He asked Jesus this question— **"What shall I do to inherit eternal life?"** He was seeking the ultimate good work HE COULD DO that would give him the assurance and security he longed for.

Obviously, his definition of eternal life and Jesus' definition were at odds with each other. Eternal life from the Lord's perspective was a personal relationship with the living God.

**John 17:3...** "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."

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What happened next must have stunned the rich young ruler. Jesus pushed back on him spiritually.

**Mark 10:18...And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone."**

The young man had called Jesus "**Good Teacher.**" Jewish rabbis did not allow the word good to be applied to them. Only God was intrinsically good.

**Psalm 34:8...O taste and see that the LORD is good;  
How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!**

**Jesus could not be good unless He was also God.**  
The identity of Jesus was crucial in Mark's gospel...

**Mark 8:27–29...** Jesus went out, along with His disciples, to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way He questioned His disciples, saying to them, "Who do people say that I am?" **28** They told Him, saying, "John the Baptist; and others say Elijah; but others, one of the prophets." **29** And He *continued* by questioning them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered and said to Him, "You are the Christ."

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Did this impressive young man understand who Jesus really was? Peter nailed it when he said this to Jesus—"You are the Christ." Jesus was the Son of God, the Jewish Messiah.

**Knowing the true identity of Jesus was vital for Peter, for the rich young ruler, and for you. Do you know Him?**

Jesus pressed him even more...

**Mark 10:19... "You know the commandments, 'DO NOT MURDER, DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, DO NOT STEAL, DO NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS, Do not defraud, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.' "**

This young man didn't know the true identity of Jesus. As a matter of fact, he didn't even know who he was. So, Jesus urged him to examine his heart by reminding him of God's expectations concerning the treatment of people. Believe me. He knew the 10 commandments and he knew that he was obligated to keep them.

**Mark 10:20...And he said to Him, "Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth up."**

Now we get to the heart of the issue. I can just see him mentally checking the box on each of these.

- **I've not killed anyone.**
- **I haven't cheated on my wife.**
- **I've not ripped anybody off in a business deal.**
- **I'm not in the habit of being deceitful.**
- **I've taken good care of my dad and mom.**

This young man was convinced that HE WAS GOOD. However, he had failed to understand that the law of God was concerned with internal righteousness, not external behavior (The Sermon on the Mount). No wonder he had hit a wall in his spiritual life. **He had bought into the idea that salvation was a result of self-righteousness.**

Unfortunately, most people in the world today have fallen for the same satanic lie—*if their good works exceed their bad works they will go to heaven when they die*. Listen...

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- **You can live a good, moral life.**
- **You can be honest in your dealings with others.**
- **You can provide for your family.**
- **You can treat others with respect.**
- **You can champion good causes.**
- **You can be a model student.**
- **You can give up something for Lent.**
- **You can give generously to the poor.**
- **You can go to church.**

Hear me now. You will never be good enough to get to heaven on your own merit!

**Ephesians 2:8–9**...For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; **9** not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Jesus cared for this man's soul too much to let him believe something that was simply not true.

**Mark 10:21**...**Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, "One thing you lack: go and**

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**sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."**

These words must have cut like a scalpel in the hand of a skilled surgeon. Truth be known, the rich young ruler had broken the first commandment—***"You shall have no other gods before Me."*** He had made a god out of his money and his stuff. The issue of materialism was addressed by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount ...

**Matthew 6:19–21,24** ... "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. **20** "But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; **21** for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. **24** No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."



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Jesus did not ask others to give up everything they possessed. But He required this young man to give everything away. Why?

**Because he was trusting in his riches; it was his god.**

The challenge of Jesus in Mark 8 hovers over this story...

**Mark 8:34–37**...And He summoned the crowd with His disciples, and said to them, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. **35** "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. **36** "For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? **37** "For what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Jesus basically told him to admit that he was a sinner and to destroy the idol he had erected in his heart and then to follow Him. That's the only way he could ever inherit eternal life. What would he do?

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**Mark 10:22...But at these words he was saddened, and he went away grieving, for he was one who owned much property.**

With his eternal destiny hanging in the balance, the rich young ruler decided to turn his back on Jesus and walk away. What a tragedy!

**Mark 10:23...And Jesus, looking around, said to His disciples, "How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!"**

Why is wealth such a danger to one's spiritual life?

**Wealth gives people a false sense of security.** (1 Timothy 6:17)

**Wealth often leads to a love for the world.** (1 John 2:15–16)

**Wealth can result in a high level of selfishness.** (Luke 16:19-31)

Notice the reaction of the disciples...

**Mark 10:24...The disciples were amazed at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God!"**

Jesus didn't tone down His statement. In fact, He repeated it and broadened it to include everyone, not just the rich.

**Mark 10:25..."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."**

The contrast between the largest animal in Israel and one of the smallest openings is powerful. Don't miss the obvious point of this illustration.

**Jesus was not teaching that it is difficult for one who trusts in riches to enter the kingdom. He was insisting that it is impossible for anyone who trusts in riches (or anything else for that matter) to enter the kingdom.**

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**Mark 10:26...They were even more astonished and said to Him, "Then who can be saved?"**

These men assumed that the rich young ruler had been blessed by God. If he couldn't be saved, who could? Great question. Here's the point...

**Mark 10:27...Looking at them, Jesus said, "With people it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God."**

No one can save themselves by being good, by being religious, by piling up good works, by giving to the poor, etc. **There is only one way to be saved and that is through faith in the Lord Jesus.**

He can and will save anybody who will turn to Him in saving faith! Here's the truth that I want you to lock into this morning...

**ETERNAL LIFE BEGINS WITH  
JESUS AND IT NEVER ENDS!**

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Don't you want to inherit eternal life? Consider these questions...

## **1. DO YOU KNOW JESUS?**

I'm not asking you if you know about Him. Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God, the Messiah, and the one and only Savior. Do you believe that He is the King of an eternal kingdom and that He has the right to determine who's in and who's out?

## **2. WHAT'S HOLDING YOU BACK?**

**\_\_IS IT YOUR THEOLOGY?** Listen, your relative goodness is like filthy rags in the sight of a holy God who is perfectly good. Don't let your self-centered theology keep you from Jesus!

**\_\_IS IT A SINFUL PLEASURE?** Yours could be a sin of immorality. It could be the freedom to spend your weekends at the lake or at the ballpark. You don't have time for God. You are just too busy, and you are having way too much fun. Beware of these fatal attractions!

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**\_\_IS IT YOUR MONEY/STUFF?** Paul warned about this blatant form of idolatry (1 Timothy 6:9-10).

Have you hit a wall in your spiritual life? This is the place where many people get stuck in a form of religion that is not satisfactory or transformational. It's the place where a lot of people start to walk away from Jesus and the church.

### **3. WILL YOU FOLLOW JESUS?**

To follow Him you must be willing to die to yourself and to anything that dares to become your #1 priority. You must trust Jesus with your whole heart.

**ETERNAL LIFE BEGINS WITH  
JESUS AND IT NEVER ENDS!**

This is your moment of truth. I pray that no one will walk away from Jesus today. Remember, it is easier to cram a camel through the eye of a needle than it is to get to heaven without Jesus!

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