

The Rich Young Ruler

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- [0 : 00] Let us resume our public worship of God and we shall sing to his praise from Psalm 27.
- Psalm 27, from the beginning. The Lord's my light and saving health, who shall make me dismayed?
- My life strength is the Lord, of whom then shall I be afraid. Well as mine enemies and foes, most wicked persons all, to eat my flesh against me rose, they stumbled and did fall.
- Against me, though unhosted camp, my heart yet fearless is. Though war against me rise, I will be confident in this. One thing I of the Lord desired and will seek to obtain.
- That all days of my life I may within God's house remain. That I the beauty of the Lord behold may and admire. And that I in his holy place may reverently inquire.
- [1 : 12] For he in his pavilion shall me hide in evil days. In secret of his tent me hide. And on a rock me raise. We shall sing these verses from the beginning of Psalm 27.
- The Lord's my light and saving health, who shall make me dismayed. The Lord's my light and saving health, who shall make me dismayed.
- My life strength is the Lord, of whom then shall I be afraid.
- When does my dead enemies and foes, most wicked persons all, to eat my flesh.
- And against me rose, they stumbled and betold.
- [2 : 32] Against me, though I know stand down, my heart yet fearlessness.
- Though one against me rise, I will be confident in this.
- One thing I often adore desire. And will seek to obtain.
- That all days of my life, I be with it, God's house remain.
- That I the beauty of the Lord behold may unruly mind.
- [3 : 48] That all days of my life, I be with it, God's life.
- In secret of his tent me hide. And on a rock me raise.
- Let us join together in prayer. Let us pray. O Lord our God, as we come before you. And this evening hour, we pray that you would bless us together.
- As we read your word and as we consider what it has to say to us. And as we engage in prayer, calling upon the name that is above every name.
- Even though our circumstances may be different to what we would normally associate with a public act of worship. Nevertheless, we are enabled by the facilities at our disposal to join with others.
- [5 : 22] Not just in the locality but beyond. Whether they would decide to do so or not. The provision is made and it is down to each one of us to avail ourselves of these things that you have placed at our disposal.

That is true of every one of us. That is true of every one of us. That the day will come which will be a day of reckoning for everyone. Where the excuses will be proof for what they are.

That opportunities that were spurned. Privileges that were little made use of. Activities that were embraced and others that were shunned.

And all of these things will be held to our account. We pray forgiveness for every transgression. Every shortcoming. Every way in which we deny God by what we do.

Lord our God be merciful. To me a sinner that prayer should never be far from our mouth. That our eyes would be upon the dust of the ground.

[6 : 31] For that is where we belong. Pride should be put under our feet. And any sense that we have of being anything other than what we are.

In the sight of a holy God. Remove it from us and enable us to have a clear appreciation of what we are in reality. We pray your blessing upon us as individuals and as family members and as community.

We pray for our island and our nation. And we remember before you the nations of the earth. We enjoy many good gifts from your hand.

In this materially rich society. Though there are often many who bemoan what they have and don't have.

In comparison to so many who are destitute of many of the gifts that we so make little use of.

[7 : 33] We pray that you would remember all such. We would remember them who are destitute. Remember them who are struggling because of drought and famine.

Where thecek of man whoçons who are in Babylon. That let us all act upon you. So it is we pray that you ■gam refer to yourself and day all the rest.

And then you must accept our fears of justice. We pray that for those who have been consolidated from their own house and no place to call it their own. There are so many ills in the world, too many to number, but you know them all, and for that reason we can come to you and ask that you would deal justly and deal righteously as you alone do.

We crave your blessing upon the preaching of your word, and that the gospel which you have sent out to all Carthage would be blessed, and that those who hear of Christ would be drawn to him, enabled by grace to put their trust in him.

Enable us to exercise that same faith, that trust that has brought us to him in the first instance, and that is true of us, that we may rest upon his finished work, believing that he has accomplished all that you entrusted to him, and that he has yet to come to claim his own and to bring them to be with him, where they will be like him, and where they will enjoy the privilege of being in his company for all eternity.

[9 : 10] We remember those who are in need this day, those who have illness to deal with, we pray for them and those who care for them, be they in homes, hospitals, or in their own home.

We pray for those who are grieving and sorrowful. This world is a veil of tears. There are seldom many days that pass without somebody experiencing grief, and grief without number.

So assuage these sicknesses, we pray. Heal the hearts, bind the wounds, pour the balm of your healing hand oil upon them, that we may know that there is God indeed.

Grant to us now as we turn to your word, that it will be blessed to us as we think of it. As we read, and as we contemplate the truth contained, may it be blessed to our soul.

Hear our petitions on our own behalf and on behalf of others. Remembering our nation and those who govern, and our Queen and our family. Lord, hear us, pardon us, in Jesus' name.

[10 : 22] We ask all things for forgiveness of sin in Christ. Amen. Amen. We're going to turn now to read the scripture of the New Testament scriptures.

The scripture of the New Testament. Gospel of Matthew. And chapter 19. We can read from verse 13 to the end of the chapter.

Matthew chapter 19 from verse 13. Then were there brought unto Jesus little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray.

And the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.

And he laid his hand on them, and departed thence. And behold, one came, and said unto him, Good master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?

[11 : 32] And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God. But if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

He saith unto him which, Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal.

Thou shalt not bear false witness. Honour thy father and thy mother. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up.

What lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come and follow me.

But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.

[12 : 44] And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? But Jesus beheld them and said unto them, With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.

Then answered Peter and said unto them, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee. What shall we have therefore? And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.

But many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first. Amen. And may the Lord at his blessing to this reading of his word and to his name be the praise.

[14 : 21] I'd like us now to turn to the account that we have here. of an encounter between the Lord Jesus Christ and the man who is described as the rich young ruler.

The story is also told in the Gospel of Mark, chapter 10, and the Gospel of Luke, chapter 18. And many of the things that we read about in this encounter, or the story of this encounter, should provoke or stimulate some questions in our own mind.

We are not told an awful lot about this man. But there are several things that may mark him out for us, and give to us sufficient material to recognise something of what was true of him.

We are told that he was a young man. And whatever that means in biblical terms is often open to debate.

He is, at the same time as being described as young, he is, we are told, someone who is sufficient maturity to be involved in the role of the local place of worship.

[16 : 11] He is someone who is rich.

A young man, we are told, had great possessions in verse 22. We also can understand that somebody that had a measure of understanding that allowed him the place of privilege wasn't down to wealth alone.

He was somebody who had wisdom. He was somebody who had wisdom.

He was somebody who had wisdom. And that's why he's given the title ruler. He'd be in a responsible position enabling him to be an instructor within the company of God's people.

And I think as well we find that he is someone who is indicating by his very conduct that he is respectful of Christ.

[17 : 37] We notice that he comes to Christ and kneels before him. He is, like Sir Cairns, that he was mannerly and respectful of Christ's place within the community at that time.

All of these things, perhaps more than any one of them, would suggest to us that this person was someone that you would be at ease with in his company.

There's nothing highlighted that would suggest to us that he was anything other than a decent bloke. A person that has the respect of those who are with him in the community.

At face value anyway, what we know of him might make us envious of him because of the status that he has, the wealth that he has.

There are many people in this world and all of these things when we think of how they stand out before us.

[18 : 53] They may draw us to them. It's often the case that some people have advantages more than others.

They are the centre of attraction within the companies that they keep.

They are able to convert. They are able to show their dexterity and skill, perhaps, in ways that give them a place within the thinking of others.

Whatever it was, I would suggest that this man, as we look at him, there are many things that are positive about him.

His youth, his wealth, his intelligence, his mannerisms. His wisdoms. And then he asks in verse 16, a question.

[19 : 58] Good master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life? There's a sign there that he knows that there is something lacking in his life.

He is not just about what he possesses or the gifts that he has. He understands that there is more to life than just what men see.

And the precious assets that may be arraigned by others are not everything. And if the question is a genuine one, and I believe it is, eternal life is something that he believes he lacks.

And if he lacks eternal life, then he understands that these things, whatever they may be, whether it is wealth or health or the popularity of those who are with him, that they do pale into insignificance.

I wonder, when we consider our own life, what is it that we give most priority to?

[21 : 14] All of these things that you could highlight in this person's life. All of them are things that we might desire for ourselves and we would perhaps possess them.

Some if not all. Some if not all. But even if we do have all of these things, is it sufficient to make us content?

Is it sufficient for us to believe that with all of these things in our life, whatever they may be, however much they are accentuated by others as things that commend us to them, are these things in our life, are these things in our life, are these things sufficient to allow us to live our life contentedly?

And clearly, if this man's question is anything to go by, it is plain that although he had all of these things, there was something lacking.

Now the second question that you may be asking arises out of the question that this young man asks. What good thing shall I do, he says?

[22 : 40] I think as a question it indicates to us that this person does not possess eternal life, even unwittingly.

What makes me think that? Well, this man shows that he believes that there is some work that he can do that will give him the peace of mind or spirit that he seeks, and rightly leaves him of the opinion that he is lacking eternal life.

He believes that by doing something that this thing that he knows that he lacks can become his. Is it any wonder Jesus feels pity for him?

Here he sees someone who knows there is something wrong with him, yet he is totally in the dark as to its remedy. And the remedy is before his eyes, and yet he cannot appreciate the fullness of the privilege that he enjoys, even in meeting with Christ at this time.

I think this is further confirmed by the test that the Lord puts on him, which exposes not only his spiritual blindness, but also his true sense of purpose.

[24 : 13] What lack I yet, he asks? Jesus puts it before him, yet he cannot see it. Surely I would have more hope for him if he had said, these have I tried to keep.

You know, I know what I am supposed to have done. I know that God requires of me to keep his word perfectly, but I have not done that.

But no, he says, the inference being that, I can't think of anything that I have left undone that I should have done.

The sad thing is that there are many who think like that. And at the moment that you realise that you haven't perfectly kept what God commands to be kept, his word, his commands, then you automatically fall into an excuse mode where you say, well I haven't, but then so and so hasn't either.

It is almost an inevitable consequence of looking entirely at yourself. Because when you look at yourself, where you fail, then you measure yourself against those whose failings are greater than your own.

[25 : 50] Even those who read this may persuade themselves that they are like this young man who possess all these things.

And as far as the law is concerned, you don't lack anything. There are those who cling fearlessly and boldly to the only hope that they have, that your works will be your salvation.

So that question arising out of the question is this. That if what Jesus is saying is true, then salvation is not within my grasp.

And if it is not within my grasp, what must I do to be saved? But even in asking that question, the belief is that I can do something.

Surely, I can do something. What must I do to be saved? Remembering that it is not just enough to ask the question.

[27 : 07] You must familiarise yourself with the only answer scripture gives, which is believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. And clearly if this man knew this, then he did not think that that was adequate.

He didn't want to trust to someone else what he believed he could do himself.

And unfortunately that is one aspect about living with all the qualities and characteristics that are so enviable.

That it leaves a person who attains to such a level of perfection, as it were, in all areas.

That they are very loath to apply to anyone else. You know, if they climb to the summit, then they do it by their own endeavour.

[28 : 14] If they have wisdom, then that wisdom has been accrued through hard work. And that's often the case. But the Bible doesn't say to us what we can do, but what is done for us.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. Preacher Bishop Ryle wrote many years ago, How many are not far from the kingdom of God?

They wish, they feel, they mean, they hope and there they stick first. Finally, one question.

One more question. Perhaps the most obvious of the Lord. As we read the instruction that the Lord gives. The instruction, I believe that's easily understood, must not be taught or thought that this is the true test for every man or even every rich man.

It was a test designed to prove the genuineness of the desire. When Jesus deals with individuals, the way he deals with the individual is appropriate to the needs of that individual.

[29 : 42] The test that he places on this rich young ruler might be of absolute no interest to anyone else but this person.

Because Jesus knew what this man's problem was, more than any other. It was a test designed to prove the genuineness of the desire that this man had expressed.

He desired the kingdom of God. He desired salvation. What is clear is that if the question asked in verse 20 is asked in all seriousness, then the answer, no matter what it will be, will not be a cause of distress.

Look again at the question. All of these things have I kept from my youth, what lack I yet, he says.

What is it that I'm missing? And if Jesus points out what is missing, then surely everything that this man would do, would direct him to dealing with this, lack.

[31 : 02] But if you notice the sorrow it caused the young man. Who will I ask you say? He had Christ.

Do you not have his word? Are you willing to commit yourself to the word's leading? This man, we are told, went away very sorrowful for one reason.

He did not wish to part from his possessions. Jesus said, go and sell what thou hast and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven and come and follow me.

Now he may not ask you to do that. He may not ask me to do that. When you think about the way the scripture speaks, I remember this said of someone.

It is not until you are tested in your Isaac that you will know what the true test is. What he meant by that is, if you remember, Abraham, the patriarch, was given according to the promise of God, a son.

[32 : 21] And he had to wait many years for that promise to be fulfilled. And then at a very painful point in his experience, God looked to be taking away that son that he had given.

He looked to require of Abraham that he sacrifice his son. And Abraham, who is known as the father of the faithful, believed that the God who had given to him his son would not take him away.

And even if he gave him to death, then God was able to give him back to him. He believed that. He believed that. He trusted in God. And whatever our Isaac is, whatever our most precious possession is, whatever our most, the thing that we hold most dear, if God challenges us in that area, how would we behave?

There are many, unfortunately, and the wealth that this world brings to them is a snare. Or its lack and the belief that you can accumulate more.

It's written somewhere that money is a universal provider for everything but happiness. And a passport everywhere but to heaven. And he said of one of the richest men in the world, what it would take to satisfy him.

[33 : 59] More of the same. Something that he never acknowledged as having enough of. He had great possessions, this young man.

There is but one reason why many will go away sorrowful. I am not talking about the ignorant masses, but the many who even tonight feel the burden of their lostness and yet are unwilling to pay the price for the redemption of their soul.

What price? Surely the salvation of your soul is something that is without money and without price. Well, Jesus says, if you would be perfect, go and sell what you have and give to the poor and you shall have treasure in heaven and come and follow me.

Whatever it is, come and follow Christ. Some people want it all and they believe that they can have all and follow Christ.

No, that's not the way it is. And that's not the way Christ would have us believe. This young man is someone that is to be admired in many ways and yet he leaves us feeling terribly sorrowful.

[35 : 24] If indeed he went on, as it appears to be, having sought salvation, what must I do to have eternal life?

And having been pointed in the direction of that life, that he went away sorrowful. At what cost?

Far more than he ever appreciated. If he lost his soul and went into eternity without being willing to surrender all for Christ.

Lord, help us to believe these truths. Let us join in prayer. Lord, come and welcome. Let us pray. If you know the peace of God, if you are... ..to be blessed. If you do need mercy for God. Open the eyes of our understanding that we will appreciate.

That you deal with each of us, where we are, and who we are. We may not be rich. We may not be wise. We may not be rulers.

[36 : 26] We may not be admired by our fellows. But you know us, and you know where we are. are. And if the desire of our heart is for eternal life, direct us to the one person through whom such life is possible, even Jesus Christ. We pray that anything that hinders us from coming to him would be presented to us as hindrances, that we may be rid of them.

Amen. Guide us in the truth and grant pardon for our sins. In Jesus' name we would ask it. Now may grace, mercy and peace from God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you all now and always. Amen.