

Matthew 19:16–30

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- [0 : 0 0] Matthew 19, verses 16 to 30. And behold, a man came up to him, saying, Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?
- And he said to him, Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments.
- He said to him, Which ones? And Jesus said, You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness. Honor your father and mother.
- And you shall love your neighbor as yourself. The young man said to him, All these I have kept. What do I still lack? Jesus said to him, If you would be perfect, go sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven.
- And come follow me. When the young man heard this, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. And Jesus said to his disciples, Truly I say to you, Only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven.
- [1 : 0 9] Again, I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God. When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, Who then can be saved?
- Jesus looked at them and said, With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible. Then Peter said in reply, See, we have left everything and followed you.
- What then will we have? Jesus said to them, Truly I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.
- And to everyone who has left houses, or brothers, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life.
- But many who are first will be last, and the last first. This is the word of the Lord. You may be seated. Well, good morning.
- [2 : 1 6] Let me add my word of welcome to you, to our service this morning. We are so glad that you are here.
- This morning, we are in what is the eleventh of now 14 lessons in our series following Jesus as King.
- Lessons learned along the way. This morning, our lesson is simply titled, What Real Wealth Looks Like.
- What Real Wealth Looks Like. Several years ago, my wife and I were in New York, just visiting.
- We decided to go into the historic Saks Fifth Avenue Department Store. We walked in, and you should have seen my wife's eyes light up.
- [3 : 3 8] It was ten glorious floors of shopping. I held on tight to my wallet.

Began to feel a little queasy. And as we walked through the store, we ended up in some exclusive section.

And we noticed something very peculiar in this section. There were no price tags on any of the items.

We asked the sales rep, where are the price tags? To which she replied, in this section, if you have to ask how much it costs, then you probably can't afford it.

She was probably right. We will see similarities here in our text this morning, where a young man approaches Jesus with a similar question, asking about the price tag on an item he actually could never afford.

[5 : 05] Now, to be clear, right up front, though Jesus says a lot about it, and scriptures are full of references to it and its problems, and Timothy says, the love of it is the root of all kinds of evil, this is not a message about money.

It's not about having too much money. It's not about earthly wealth. There's nothing wrong with wealth. It's not about having things. There's nothing wrong with having nice things.

Additionally, to be sure, there are certainly themes, lessons about priorities, about what you treasure, and about sacrifice that we will discover through this text.

However, what this text, this morning, is most about is the most valuable thing in life you could ever have, but you could never earn.

You could never pay for. Yet, with God's help, it's available to you. It is salvation, full and free.

[6 : 28] This, my friends, is what real wealth looks like. Our passage opens here in verse 16 with a man coming up to Jesus to ask him a question.

Not just any man, but verse 20 says he was a young man, and verse 22 says he had a lot of possessions, so he was actually a rich young man.

Brother rich young man, Brother R-Y-M, we'll call him for short, by our worldly standards, really had it going on. The Gospel of Luke describes him as a ruler, meaning he probably had some level of power and influence as a young man.

He was everything that even our own culture values as the very picture of success. We can further surmise from the text that he was a good brother, moral even, keeping the commandments, verse 20.

Yet, as successful as he appeared to be, there was something missing. There was a hole, an aching need that still plagued his soul.

[7 : 49] As wealthy as he was, he still didn't know what real wealth looked like, nor how to get it.

Now, I need you for just a moment to take Brother R-Y-M's initials out and insert your own. Have you ever felt like something was missing?

Like there was a whole yearning to be filled in your life? I encourage you to discover and embrace this morning real wealth through Jesus Christ.

As we look deeper into our text, we have to look at a couple of critical components. First, is the critical questions that are posed in our text.

Then, the compelling responses Jesus gives in our text. And finally, the confident assurance of what is yet to come.

[8 : 56] Critical questions, compelling responses, and confident assurance. So here, in the opening of our text, verse 16, this rich young man comes to Jesus to ask him a profound, critical question.

Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life? This, indeed, is the question all mankind grapples with.

Maybe some of you in this room today. How can I secure a place place in heaven? Now, this young man should actually be commended for coming to Jesus this way.

He wasn't trying to trap or trick Jesus, as the Pharisees would often pose questions even earlier in this same chapter.

He wasn't coming for healing. He wasn't coming for his child to be blessed. he was asking a very sincere question. But with this question, there was already a fundamental flaw.

[10 : 10] Here it is, six words. What good deed must I do? Brother RYM was under the impression that there was something he could do, some act he could perform, some way he could earn, pay for eternal life.

Back in 1990, a Tennessee man was arrested for getting drunk and shooting at his girlfriend's car.

In court, before sentencing, the judge asked him if he had learned anything. Yes, your honor, I have. I learned that no matter what you do, you can't make a woman love you if she don't.

Yes, for you music buffs in the room, that real courtroom line, went on to be turned into a song that became a number one hit for singer Bonnie Raitt.

And no more than that man could do anything to make his girlfriend love him, can you or I or this rich young man do anything to gain eternal life.

[11 : 40] love him. So now in the dialogue that ensues starting at verse 17 through 22, we see the first set of Jesus compelling responses.

First, Jesus reminds him that only God is good. Trying to get him to understand that there's not enough good in us, nor enough good about us, nor enough good that can come through us to get ourselves into heaven.

Romans chapter three tells us, none is righteous, no not one, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. I'm about to get ahead of myself, Dave, but I can't help it.

That next verse in Romans chapter three says, but we are justified by his grace as a gift through redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

No, you're not good enough, but God is. No, you can't do enough, but God can. No, you can't pay enough, but God already did.

[12 : 51] God being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our sins, made us alive together with Christ by grace.

you have been saved and that same grace, amazing grace, is still available to us today.

That's what real wealth looks like. So Jesus now continues his response to our dear brother by meeting him right where he was at.

Okay, since you're so focused on doing stuff, Jesus says, okay, if you would enter life, keep the commandments, to which this guy responds, which ones?

To which Joe Pace would have responded, what kind of crazy question is that? How about you just keep all of them?

[13 : 59] all? But no, Jesus, like a skilled attorney who already knows where this line of questioning is going, begins to rattle off several of the more horizontal commandments, including adding one of the greatest commandments from Leviticus 19 about loving your neighbor as yourself.

the young man quickly replies, I keep all those. Watch how now Jesus will show the man how much he falls short of even keeping the first commandment.

You shall have no other gods before me. Verse 21, Jesus says, okay, you really want to go here? Okay, this is really what we're going to do.

Then sell all your possessions. Liquidate your assets. Donate all the proceeds to charity. Then follow me.

Well, that was just a little bit too much to ask. Next comes one of the saddest, most ironic verses in the Bible.

[15 : 16] Verse 22, he went away sorrowful because he had great possessions. Wow, that's not something you hear every day.

Someone walking away sad because they've got so much money? It's like a person who's sad because they won the lottery. Or you're sad because you got a larger than expected tax refund check or sad because you received an unexpected inheritance.

We usually associate great wealth with great joy. But this man was sad because of his great wealth.

More accurately, the problem wasn't that he had money. The problem was that money had him. Jesus had diagnosed his problem correctly in that what he had was more important to him than what Jesus could give.

Now, it's important to note that this is not a universal command for all Christians. Jesus doesn't ask all of us to sell all that we have and give to the poor, though we should be good stewards of what we have, support our local church and be willing to share the good things God has given us with those who are in need.

[16 : 51] We know Jesus had other followers who were wealthy and he didn't ask them to give it all away, but God does, however, call us to surrender all that we have, all that we are for Christ and his kingdom, to follow Christ wherever he leads.

This is really the heart of it. Here it is. Jesus' main command here is not so much give it all away, but rather, come follow me.

Jesus knew that this young man could never follow him unless he first let go of his wealth. And so Jesus put his finger on the precise thing that was keeping him from following.

What's your one thing? What is keeping you from following Jesus fully today? What priorities have you placed ahead of Jesus?

It could be money. It could be pride. It could be status, fame, or popularity. It could be a specific relationship. It could be a pattern of living that you are just not willing to let go of.

[18 : 19] What are you choosing over Jesus? What is making you walk away sad rather than embracing Jesus and the free gift of eternal life?

Well, the implications of this young man's rejection could not go unaddressed. As it appears, the conversation with Brother RYM was personal, but it wasn't private.

There were lessons for the disciples to learn, both then and now for us. as Jesus in verses 23 and 24 gives another of his compelling responses.

Here it is. And Jesus said to his disciples, Truly I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. Again, I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.

Wait, a camel going through the eye of a needle. Jesus is, again, using humorous hyperbole, exaggeration here.

[19 : 37] And come on, you have to admit, this image of a camel going through a needle is pretty funny. I have trouble taking thread and putting it through a needle.

How about a camel? wealth? And what does God have against wealthy people? First, let's demystify the word wealth.

Lest you think in this room that this has nothing to do with you. Wealth here is not just Elon Musk, Bill Gates wealth.

it's really you and me. We don't even understand how culturally we are blessed and benefited in ways that many people in the world couldn't even imagine.

Just ask some of our global ministry partners. Jesus warns about wealth saying, well, let me ask you this. Do you know where you're going to sleep tonight?

[20 : 42] Are you worried about where your next meal today is going to come from? Did you come to church wearing the same thing you had on yesterday or did you go to your closet and make a choice about what you would wear?

He's talking about us. He's talking about those who really are blessed to have more than what they need. And the concern is that when you have more than what you need, there's a tendency to forget who supplies all your needs in the first place.

Evangelist Vance Havner once said, God doesn't mind you holding possessions in high esteem. He just asked that you hold it with an open hand so that when he asks you for it, he doesn't have to fight you for it.

So Jesus says it's difficult for those that have wealth to enter the kingdom of God. Now you got to understand that this was actually a radical statement.

It was radical for his disciples to hear because at that time it was assumed that wealth was a sign of favor from God.

[22 : 07] if you're familiar with the story of Job, we spent a lot of time going after Job's friends who went off on Job, questioned Job when Job fell on hard times.

But Job's friends were not outliers. Job's friends represented the theology of the day. If you prospered, it's because you did good.

if you suffered, it was because you did something wrong. The rich young man's claim to have kept the commandments would have made total sense to the disciples.

Well, no wonder you're rich. You kept the commandments because there was the prevailing notion that wealth made it easier to enter the kingdom of God.

Jesus turned this notion on its head. So the astonished disciples upon hearing this now, verse 25, pose their own critical question.

[23 : 13] Now, Jesus, if it's that hard for rich people, you know, camel through the eye of a needle, for rich people to be saved, what possible chance is there for the rest of us to be saved?

Here it is again, to be saved, the real emphasis of this text. This isn't a text about money, it's a text about salvation.

Salvation now helps us understand better the previous verses. Salvation is the eternal life mentioned in verse 16. Salvation is the treasure in heaven mentioned in verse 21.

Salvation is the kingdom of heaven mentioned salvation in verse 21, 23. Salvation is what real wealth looks like.

How? How, Jesus, can we be saved? They asked. Jesus gives another compelling response here in verse 26 and says, well, you actually can't.

[24 : 21] with man, this is impossible. But with God, all things are possible.

Maybe you missed it. This is a great place to shout, shout right here. This is the parachute verse. This is the lifeline, the rescue verse of the text.

In other words, no one can be saved by human achievement. We can only be saved by divine accomplishment. Ephesians says, for by grace you have been saved through faith.

And this is not your own doing. It is the gift of God. Our salvation is dependent on one thing.

That's our faith in what God has done through his son, Jesus Christ. Every time a person comes to saving faith, it's a direct miracle from God.

[25 : 27] So yes, it's hard for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. It's hard for all of us. In fact, it's impossible apart from God.

But with God, all things are possible. Let's see if we can find some more help here in our text. Let's pull over and do a quick etymological breakdown of the word all.

Let's see. All means all. And that's all all means.

So that means this truth with God, all things are possible, doesn't just apply to salvation.

It also applies to everything in your life that challenges you. Every obstacle that seems to be in your way, everything that you would change if you could have tried to change, but you can't.

[26 : 33] God can do all things. I can't make it on my own. It's just too much for me. You're right. But with God, all things are possible.

It's too heavy a burden to carry. But with God, all things are possible. I can't see how I'm going to make it through this season in my life. No, you can't.

But with God, all things are possible. Now, while that all by itself is enough to shout on, it wasn't enough for Peter.

So in verse 27, Peter asks another critical question. You got to love Peter. Peter is that bold friend you had in school that asked all the questions everybody really wanted to ask but was afraid to ask.

Ask Peter to ask because Peter's not scared to ask. So Peter asked the question. Okay, Jesus, we heard what you said to brother RYM and he wouldn't give up anything and he got nothing.

[27 : 45] So what about us? We have left everything to follow you. What do we get? Now this time in Jesus' compelling response, verses 28 and 30, instead of rebuking Peter, he answers with grace and gives my last point, confident assurance about what is yet to come.

He first tells Peter that in the world that is to come, the disciples were going to receive special honor and sit on thrones with him.

But praise God, then Jesus goes on to extend his promise of reward to all believers who have followed him and sacrificed for the sake of the gospel.

Verse 29, everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for Jesus' sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.

Now the top of verse 29 reminds us there's a cost to following Jesus. If you remember back ten lessons ago to our first lesson in this series, we learned we were going to have to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow.

[29 : 22] It may cost you some relationships. It may cost you some possessions. It may cost you some ridicule and heartache. But as much as the top of verse 29 tells us it costs to follow Jesus, the bottom of verse 29 tells us it also pays to follow Jesus.

Jesus will more than make up for what you have given up for his sake. My dad used to say, the Lord sometimes pays us cash, sometimes credit.

He may pay you cash and bless you here in this life. Thank God for that. But even when he pays on credit with a payment that won't come until the next life, I'm fine with that because I've lived long enough to know that God's got a perfect credit score and his credit is good with me and whatever he has said he will do will surely come to pass.

You can be assured you will inherit eternal life. That's what the rich man wanted. That's what all this is about.

That's what real wealth looks like. The rich man wanted eternal life but he wasn't willing to follow Jesus to get it.

[30 : 58] So, he lost out on the ultimate reward. And all that money he was unwilling to part with if he had just followed Jesus.

The text says he would have gained a hundred times as much and he would have received a seat in the kingdom. Our text closes here at verse 30 with a final compelling response from Jesus.

Many who are first will be last and the last first. Again, Jesus makes a counter cultural statement heaven's payment system.

In our culture, the one with the most toys, the most power, the most influence, and connections wins. The first ought to be first and the last, you're last.

So, stay last because you should be last. Not so in heaven's economy. money. Those of you in this room who have felt marginalized, pushed to the side, kicked to the curb, forgotten, neglected, Jesus says, don't worry about your place in line because at the end of the day, many who are last will be first.

[32 : 30] You may not have what others have, but keep on following Jesus. You may run a little slower than others run, but keep on following Jesus.

They may never recognize you or call your name, but keep on following Jesus. You may not be the quarterback, but play whatever position the coach puts you in and keep on following Jesus, trusting that at the end of the day, he'll make everything all right.

I don't care what Charles Schwab, Goldman Sachs, or Fidelity tells you about wealth management. Following Jesus, putting him first, is the best retirement plan anybody could ever have.

life. Jesus left a life of first, lived a life with the least, died the death of the despised last, and rose again, so that all of us, first and last, could know the hope of eternal life.

Eternal life. Now, that's what real wealth looks like. Let's pray.

[34 : 04] Father, we thank you for the gift of Jesus Christ, for the free gift that you gave us, that all we have to do is acknowledge him as our Lord and Savior, and you said you would forgive our sins and make us yours.

So, Father, anything that stands in the way of us following you, God, we ask that you remove it. We want to follow you truly, dearly, completely, and more closely.

We want to be used by you so that at the end of the day, we can have real wealth, and we can live with you forever.

Father, we thank you. In your son's name we pray. Amen.