

WELCOME TO SOUTHLAND!

September 5, 2021

Matthew 19, September 5th, 2021

Intro:

- If you have your Bibles with you, I invite you to open them up to Matthew 19. Today we are going to be focusing on verses 16-30 (commonly referred to as the Rich Young Ruler), so I would like to start by reading the passage for you. I will also include a pre-cursor, starting in verse 13.
- Lets read! (Matthew 19:13-30)

Pray

A. Upside Down Kingdom

- The first thing that I want us to look at in this passage is the contrast between the disciples dealings with the children (v. 13-15) and the rich man (v. 16-30).

Situation #1:

- It says that people brought children to Jesus, who by this time was well established in his ministry and had respect from many people. As the children approached him, the disciples (though it doesn't specify who) stepped in to *save the day*... or so they thought.
- They rebuked the children.
 - Kids = **NOT WORTHY of Jesus's time or blessing.**
- What happens next? Jesus rebukes the disciples!

Situation #2:

- But read on, and we discover that a man approaches Jesus.
- What do we know about this man?
 - We know that he was **rich** (has *power*) (Matthew 19:22)
 - We know that he was **young** (full of *potential*) (Matthew 19:22)
 - Luke mentions that he is a "**ruler**" (has *influence*) (Luke 18:18)
 - We know he was **upright** (has *respect*) (Matthew 19:20)
- Notice that there is no "rebuking" by the disciples when he walks up... and why would they?
 - **Rich, young, influential (& upright) ruler = WORTHY!**
- That's why when Jesus let's this man walk away... the disciples are STUNNED!

Truth: The way that Jesus views the world, people's worth, significance, potential, etc. is usually radically different from how his disciples (including us) often view the world!

- That's why its called – the Upside Down Kingdom!
 - "... many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first." **Matthew 19:30**
- Do you ever catch yourself evaluating whether or not someone else is "worth" Jesus's time, kindness, blessing, healing or comfort? Never mind that, how about your time, kindness, etc?

- Let there not be any favouritism or partiality among us!

B. What must I do?

Now we are going to shift focus and look a little deeper at this interaction that Jesus has with this young man. Fair warning; we are going to be jumping back and forth between Matthew's account of this story, and the Gospel of Mark.

- The man starts by asking this question, *"Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?"* **I believe this to be the wrong question. I will return to that at the end.**
- On the surface, that sounds like an important question, doesn't it? I'd say so!

*As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" **Mark 10:17***

- This man is **eager** (running), and **humble** (kneeling)... It seems to me that he **genuinely** wants to know how he can be saved. But notice how Jesus responds to him. He zero's in on a specific word that the man uses... the word is... **GOOD**.

*Why do you call me good? Jesus answered. No one is good – except God alone. **Mark 10:18***

- What's Jesus getting at?
- Some people have taken this response to mean Jesus didn't consider himself good, and if he isn't good (sinless), then he ISN'T GOD. Is Jesus refuting the claim that he is good? **NO**. He just accepted being called the son of God by Peter, remember?

Rather, Jesus is asking the man – **"What is your standard for goodness?"**

- **"WHY do you call me good?"** **Mark 10:18**
- **Analogy:** Recently I was together with friends and got to meet their new dog. Suppose I was chatting with you afterwards, and said, "Now, *that* was a good dog!"
 - Well suppose you were curious, and you asked – "Why was the dog good?"
 - Maybe I would say that it reminded me of my childhood dog which I was fond of...
 - Or perhaps I'd say that I usually hang out with some weird cat-obsessed people... and its just good to see a dog every now and again.
 - Or perhaps I'd say that compared to the dog that almost bit me the other day, *this* dog was good. You know... as far as dogs go, it was a good one.
- You see, good can be a relative term. Good compared to what? What is your standard for goodness?

Isn't it true, lots of people would say about themselves *"I'm a good person"* ... I've had many conversations with people (Christians and Non-Christians alike) about eternity. And when I ask them about such things, I often hear - *"Well... I'm a pretty good person. I try to do good things... I'm honest... I work hard... I love my family... I don't litter... I give to charity... I come to church... etc."*

- Ever notice at funerals... we never say, "They were *not* a good person!" At least not out loud...

- And Christians, when we share our testimonies, doesn't it often sound like... "Once upon a time I was not so good, then I met Jesus and now I am a good person..."
- **WHERE AM I GOING WITH THIS?**
 - Jesus asks you and me today, "Why do you call me good?" **Is he good among many?**
 - And – "Why do you call yourselves good?" ("*Compared to them... I am a saint!*")
 - What is our standard? Other people, or God? The culture, or the Word?

How does the conversation continue?

...If you want to enter life, keep the commandments."

"Which ones?" he inquired.

Jesus replied, "You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, honor your father and mother,' and 'love your neighbor as yourself."

*"All of these I have kept," the young man said. **Matt. 19:17-20***

C. The Law and Greatest Commandment

- "All these I have kept..." Those words must have felt so good to say, right?! Welcome to the club rich young ruler!
 - But not quite yet... **and even the young man anticipates it.** For he continues...
 - "*All of these I have kept," the young man said. "What do I still lack?" Matt. 19:20*
- You know what's interesting... and this was a new thought for me this week as I studied. Why does Jesus choose this list of commandments?
 - **1) Murder; 2) Adultery; 3) Stealing; 4) False Testimony; 5) Honor Father and Mother; 6) Love your neighbour as yourself.**
- Why these? Is this the screening test for heaven? If so, we all really need to brush up on this list! Like cramming for a text in high school, put this list on a flash card and quickly memorize it!!
- But why these specific laws? In order to find that answer, we need to back it up.
- All the way to when the law was being given to the Israelites. Lets look at the 10 commandments quickly. Exodus 20:1-17
 - 1. No other god's before me.**
 - 2. No images in the form of idols.**
 - 3. No taking the Lord's name in vein.**
 - 4. Remember the Sabbath.**
 - 5. Honor your Father and Mother.**
 - 6. Do not murder.**
 - 7. Do not commit adultery.**
 - 8. Do not steal.**
 - 9. Do not give false testimony.**
 - 10. Do not covet.**
- Notice here that Jesus splits the list in half (he picks 5/10), and then adds one more that summarizes that group of 5; "love your neighbor as yourself".
- **Jesus was once asked what the greatest commandment was (Matt 22:34-40).**
 - **1) Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind. (Duet 6:5)**

- 2) Love your neighbor as yourself. (Lev. 19:18)
- **When looking at the 10 commandments, we see a similar pattern.**

God/Inward Focused (Love the Lord your God)	People/Outward Focused (Love your neighbor)
No other god's before me	Honor your Father and Mother
No idols	Do not murder
No taking the Lord's name in vein	Do not commit adultery
Remember the Sabbath	Do not steal
Do not covet	Do not give false testimony

- He starts by running this man through the outward screening test. **And he passed!**
 - Notice how distraught the disciples are? *“How **than can anyone be saved?**”* By all outward standards, this was an upright man! His wealth was accumulated in an honorable way, unlike greedy tax collectors. Surely his prominence was a result of his faithfulness to God!
 - They are truly perplexed by this... if **HE** can't be saved, what hope do **they** have?

But of course, that's not where Jesus leaves it.

*Jesus answered, “If you want to be **perfect**, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”*

When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth. (Matt. 19:21-22)

He passed the outward test (the one that we can sometimes see), but now Jesus will reveal how the man is doing with the inward test (the one that only God can see).

- So why does the man walk away sad? **Because the Lord just showed this man an idol in his life.**
- He walked away sad because he had great wealth. Money, affluence, power, comfort, influence in the world – these things had become his idols. These things had prevented him from loving the Lord with all his heart. These things prevented him from saying yes to the call!
- You see... those first commandments (Love the Lord your God...) set the tone/shape our motive for how we live our lives, and the good things we do!
- **Let's be clear: There are MANY “good people” in the world!**
 - People that are generous with their time and money!
 - People that fight for justice, and that want to make the world a better place!
 - People that would give the shirt of their own backs to help another.
 - People that would risk their own safety to save another's life!
- But lets also be clear: Jesus is saying, unless those good works proceed from a heart of love and surrender to him, they won't save us. Christians... our lives should be filled with good works! It stands to reason that If we are walking in the footsteps of Christ, we ought to be leading the charge in loving others; In finding ways to be the hands and feet of Jesus in this broken world!
- **What motivates our good works?**

- Is it to *earn* our way to heaven?
- Is it to gain recognition from others?
- *Is it to get back? I scratch your back, you scratch mine?*
- Is it to create our own “heaven on earth”?

D. Lessons From the Rich Young Ruler:

In the time remaining, I would like to share 3 practical takeaway’s from this story...

1. **We must receive, not earn the Kingdom.**

- Remember at the start of this message when I said that I believe the rich young man’s opening question was the wrong one? I’ll tell you why I believe that.
- Looking at Mark’s account again, which follows the same order of events as Matthew, notice Jesus’s conversation just prior to the rich young ruler. He was talking to children!
 - *“Truly I tell you, anyone who will not **receive** the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” **Mark 10:15***
- **The Kingdom of God must be RECEIVED as a gift; it can not be bought!**
 - Think about the way in which a child receives a gift on Christmas. I have four boys, and not once have they gotten a present from me and asked, “What do I owe you?”
- The other thing I’ve noticed on Christmas morning is how quickly a child can toss aside one present as soon as a new present (still in its wrappings) is handed to them.
 - We are called to receive the Kingdom like a child – but we must LET GO of what’s in our hands! And to take it a step further, the type of heart that Jesus is looking for is one that holds the gift giver above the gift!
- Are you trying to earn favour with God? Or have you received this gift given to you?
 - *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast. **Ephesians 2:8-9***
 - **“Grace and effort are not opposites – Grace and EARNING are!”** Dallas Willard

2. **Jesus LOVED, and so should we.**

- We might be tempted to believe that Jesus LOVED putting this young man in his place. Almost as if Jesus looked forward to crushing his hopes and sending him off sad.
- But again, look what Mark records for us: *“Jesus looked at him and loved him.” **Mark 10:21***
 - Jesus looked at this man, who came so close... and loved him. Jesus loved this man, and wanted him to follow him.
- We need to learn to love like Jesus!
 - #1, love requires truth!
 - #2, truth must be spoke in love!

3. **Receiving the call to “Follow Me” requires a miracle!**

- What I’ve learnt this past week as I have been sitting on this passage is... we are all like this rich young ruler. All of us have to wrestle with these things we don’t want to let go of. We all have to come to grips with the fact that we aren’t as good as we think we are... especially when the standard is GOD!
- “Who then can be saved?” THAT is a great question!
 - Jesus’s response; *“**With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible!**” **Matt. 19:26***

- The cost of following Jesus is so high that it is flat out impossible to do it on our own.
- There is no good people and bad people. **There is only a GOOD GOD, and sinners saved by grace!**