

# The Rich Young Ruler

A wealthy young ruler asks Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life, but walks away sorrowful when told to sell all and follow Jesus.

Matthew 19:16-30 • Mark 10:17-27 • Luke 18:18-30

CHARACTERS: Rich Young Ruler, Jesus, The Disciples

THEMES: Discipleship, Wealth, Eternal Life, Sacrifice

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A CERTAIN RULER came running to Jesus, kneeled to Him, and asked, 'Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?' This young man possessed great wealth and held a position of authority, yet he recognized his spiritual need. His earnestness was evident in how he ran to Jesus and knelt before Him, showing both urgency and humility. He had everything the world valued, but he sensed something was missing.

Jesus responded, 'Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God.' Jesus was probing the young man's understanding of who He truly was. Then Jesus said, 'If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.' The young man asked, 'Which?' Jesus listed several commandments from the second table of the Law, those dealing with relationships with others: '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: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.'

The young man answered confidently, 'All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?' He genuinely believed he had fulfilled these commandments and sensed there was still something missing in his spiritual life. Mark records that Jesus, beholding him, loved him - moved

with compassion for this sincere seeker who nonetheless misunderstood the depths of his own need and the demands of true righteousness.

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.' This command exposed the young man's true god: his wealth. Despite his religious observance, his heart was bound to his possessions. When the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions. He could not bring himself to part with his wealth, even for eternal life. The cost of discipleship was too high in his estimation.

Jesus then said unto His disciples, 'Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. 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.' The disciples were exceedingly amazed, asking, 'Who then can be saved?' for they shared the common Jewish belief that wealth was a sign of God's blessing. Jesus looked at them and said, 'With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.' Salvation is always God's work, whether for rich or poor. Peter then spoke up: 'Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?' Jesus assured them that those who leave everything for His sake will receive a hundredfold in this life and inherit everlasting life, and that many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first, indicating that earthly status and heavenly reward often stand in inverse relationship.