

The Rich Young Ruler.

Mark 10:17-22.

Sunday, May 4, 2008.

The man in question is reported by Matthew to have been a young man; by Luke that he was a ruler, (most likely a synagogue official); and all three evangelists report him to have been rich. Hence he has become known as “the rich young ruler.”

Despite a very promising beginning, his encounter with the Lord had a tragic ending.

I. A good start.

A. He came to Jesus.

Since there is no other Name given under heaven by which we must be saved this young man made a wise choice in coming to Jesus.

Nor did he come with frivolous things; things pertaining to the finer points of theology, he came about matters of eternal consequence; of life and death.

He did not come as one wise in his own conceit as did the Pharisees, nor did he come to entrap Jesus with trick questions; he came as a sincere seeker.

B. He came in haste.

He came running to Jesus.

This is a fair indication that the matter on his heart was a pressing one.

This man made haste in coming to Jesus.

How much better it would be for us if we had this sense of urgency to settle matters between us and the Lord

We have a throne of grace where Jesus rules in grace, yet how slow we are to go there and how seldom do we run there!

C. He came with reverence.

He knelt before Jesus as he brings his question: “What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?”

He comes in the same spirit as that of the leper in Ch 1:22, and the spirit of Jairus in Ch. 5:22.

Even as they received the answer from the Lord according to their faith, so this man did also receive a sincere answer from the Lord.

D. He came as a man under conviction; a man that was burdened for his own soul.

His burden was not easily relieved.

Even after the Lord sets the road to eternal life via the keeping of the commandments before him, and he (erroneously) says “all these things I have kept from my youth,” his heart is still not at ease; he still is convicted that he is missing something. So he adds acc. to Matthew 19:20 “what do I still lack?”

II The shallowness of the human heart.

A. “Why do you call me good? No one is good but One, that is God.”

1. The Lord calls him on the thoughtless way in which he ascribes goodness, which belongs to God alone, to Jesus, without realizing who he is talking to.

2. Had this man truly believed that Jesus was “God with us,” he would have obeyed the Lord’s directive.

3. The thoughtless way in which he ascribes goodness to one whom he regards as

a human teacher is an indication of the ruler's superficial view of true goodness found in God and His law alone.

B. Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth.

1. Here he gives evidence of the superficial knowledge he had of the requirement of the law.
2. Along with that he had a very superficial knowledge of his own attainments in keeping the law.
3. Jesus confronts him only with the second table of the law which is summarized as: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." This means, do not withhold from your neighbor the love you owe them.
4. We should not withhold from our neighbor things like:
His reputation; his wages; his knowledge of the gospel; the assurance that he is being loved, and help for him in time of need. It is a tall order indeed!
5. Remember that this was a very wealthy man, and by what follows we see that he was very attached to his possessions.

In all likelihood he had not progressed beyond feeding the poor with the crumbs that fell of his table. Luke 16:21.

III. The Love of Christ.

"Jesus looking at him, loved him..."

- A. In this Jesus proves Himself a faithful High Priest who has compassion on the ignorant and those going astray. Hebrews 5:2.
- B. Here too is the love of God that extends far beyond the elect.
In the revealed will of God his love and goodwill toward all are revealed.
Psalm 145:8,9 and Luke 6:35,36.
- C. Jesus loved him in spite of his shallowness, and yet he could not be comfortable in his shallowness as were the Pharisees.
- D. Here too we may see ourselves as the objects of God's love and care.
He loves us as we are and where we are.

IV. The sorrow of the rich young ruler.

- A. His heart had nestled itself very comfortably in his abundant riches.
Here his heart found its identity. This is who he was; a man of wealth.
Here he found his self esteem.
Here was the fountainhead of his joy and enjoyment of life.
Here was his comfort and security in life.
Here was his purpose and power and glory in life.
Here was the resting place for his heart.
- B. Possessions had become what the Lord needed to be. They had taken the place of God. Our heart is to nestle itself in God and find its all in Him alone.
- C. To accommodate the move of the rich man's heart from nestling in riches to nestling in God, the Lord told him to destroy the old nest.
- D. He walked away sadly rather than fall at Jesus feet asking for that grace and help which he needed to move his heart from riches to God.