

RICH YOUNG RULER

Matthew 19:16-30; Mark 10:17-31; Luke 18:18-30

STRUCTURE

Key-persons: Jesus and the rich young ruler

Key-location: Road to Jerusalem

Key-repetitions:

- Good: man addressed Jesus, “Good teacher” (Mat 19:16; Lk 18:18); Jesus responded, “Why do you call me good? No one is good; only God is good” (Mat 19:17; Lk 18:19).
- Rich/wealth: young man was wealthy (Mat 19:22; Lk 18:23); Jesus said that it is hard for the rich to enter God’s Kingdom; it’s easier for a camel to go through the needle’s eye than for the rich to enter God’s Kingdom (Mat 19:23-24; Lk 18:24-25).
- Questions asked: man asked Jesus what he must do to receive eternal life (Mat 19:16; Lk 18:18); Jesus asked, “Why do you call me good?” (Mk 10:18; Lk 18:19); man asked, “Which commandments?” (Mat 19:18); man asked, “What else must I do?” (Mat 19:20).
- Commandments: Jesus told the man to obey the commandments (Mat 19:17); man asked, “Which commandments?” (Mat 19:18); Jesus mentioned seven commandments (Mat 19:18; Lk 18:20).
- Give up: Jesus requested the young man to give up his wealth (Mat 19:21; Lk 18:22); Peter told Jesus that they had left everything (Mat 19:27; Lk 18:28); Jesus promised that all who give up things for God’s Kingdom will be rewarded in both the present age and the age to come (Mat 19:29; Lk 18:29-30).

Key-attitudes:

- Rich man's curiosity.
- Rich man's self-confidence.
- Jesus' sternness.
- Jesus' love for the rich man.
- Rich man's disappointment at Jesus' demand.
- Disciples' shock at Jesus' remarks.

Initial-situation:

Jesus was in the second half of his third year of public ministry. The religious leaders' antagonism toward Jesus increased, and the people flip-flopped between excitement for Jesus when he performed a miracle, and anger toward Jesus when they didn't like his teaching. Jesus was traveling toward Jerusalem. On the way he interacted with the crowd that followed him, and he constantly found teaching moments for his disciples.

Initial-problem:

A man asked Jesus, “Good teacher, what must I do to receive eternal life?”

Final-situation:

Jesus promised his disciples that if anyone gave up anything for the sake of the Kingdom of God, they would receive much more in this present age and, in the age to come, eternal life."

BIBLE STORY

A man asked Jesus, "Good teacher, what must I do to receive eternal life?"

Jesus answered, "Why do you call me good? No one is good. Only God is good. If you desire to enter into life, obey the commandments."

The man asked, "Which commandments?"

Jesus answered, "You know the commandments, 'Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother, and love your neighbor as yourself.'"

The young man answered, "I've obeyed all these since I was a boy. What else must I do?" (Mat 19:16-20; Lk 18:18-21).

Jesus looked at the man and loved him (Mk 10:21).

Jesus told the young man, "You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and distribute the money to the poor, and you'll have treasure in heaven. Then come and follow me."

The young man heard this and became very sad, because he was very wealthy (Mat 19:21-22; Lk 18:22-23).

Jesus looked at the young man and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the Kingdom of God! Indeed, it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter God's Kingdom."

Those who heard Jesus asked, "Who then can be saved?"

Jesus replied, "What is impossible for people to do, is possible for God to do" (Mat 19:23-26; Lk 18:24-27).

Peter told Jesus, "We left everything we owned to follow you!"

Jesus told his disciples, "I tell you the truth. Everyone who gave up home, wife, brothers, parents, or children for the sake of the Kingdom of God will receive much more in this present age and, in the age to come, eternal life. However, many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first" (Lk 18:28-30).

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

1. What catches your attention in the story?
2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand?
3. Who are the main characters in the story?
4. What problems did the characters face?
5. How did the characters face their problems?
6. How have you faced similar problems?
7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you?
8. What does the story tell about God?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What was the rich man's assumption on how a person obtains eternal life?
2. What did the rich man profess about himself?
3. What did Jesus say that the rich man lacked?
4. How did the rich man react to Jesus' demand?
5. What did the rich man love most?
6. Jesus hit the rich man where it hurt – his money. Where would it hurt you if Jesus said, "This needs to go"?
7. Why is it hard for the rich to follow Jesus?
8. How is it possible for the rich to follow Jesus?
9. Is there something you need to give up to follow Jesus?
10. In this story, what does Jesus say to you about possessions and following Jesus?

LIFE-LESSONS

1. **The rich young man committed four mistakes. Each one was corrected by Jesus** (Mat 19:16-21):
 - **He was mistaken about Jesus as a person**, considering him a good teacher. Jesus corrected him (Mk 10:17). Jesus is good because he is God. If he is not God, he is not a good man (Mk 10:18).
 - **He was mistaken about how to obtain eternal life**, supposing that he could obtain it by doing good things (Mat 19:16). Jesus corrected him by confronting him with the high demands of the Divine Law (Mat 19:17).
 - **He was mistaken about himself**. He thought that he had kept the law (Mat 19:20). Jesus corrected him, testing him as to his love for his neighbor (Mat 19:19) and his works for justice (Mat 19:21). Jesus opened his eyes to his failure (Mat 19:22).
 - **His greatest mistake was his attachment to wealth which led him to reject the invitation to follow Jesus** (Mat 19:21-22). No one can serve two masters, wealth and God (Mat 6:24).
2. **Jesus loves the sinful person**. He looked at the rich young man with love (Mk 10:21). The young man was proud and didn't see himself as a sinner, yet Jesus still loved him.
3. **The renouncement of everything that the sinful person possesses is the primary condition for discipleship**. That was a precondition for the rich young man (Mat 19:16-22; Mk 10:17-23; Lk 18:18-22). That precondition was also established in the parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Value (Mat 13:44-45).
4. **It is only because of God having unlimited power that any sinner is saved**. From the human point of view, salvation is impossible because it cannot be obtained by human merits. However, for God it is possible (Mk 10:27), because the sinner's

salvation is always by the grace of God. If salvation were not a free gift from God, no one would be able to obtain it (Jn 3:3-6; Rm 3:24; Eph 2:8-10).

5. **Popular beliefs found within a culture make it difficult to understand biblical teachings.** When Jesus said that it was difficult for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God (Mk 10:23-24), the disciples were shocked, because the Jewish culture believed that prosperity was evidence of divine favor.
6. **Following Jesus requires sacrifices, yet it brings benefits.** Jesus told Peter that those who sacrifice to follow him will be rewarded (Lk 18:26-30).

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Pantomime Retelling of the Story:

- The storyteller tells the story one time.
- The storyteller asks for three volunteers to pantomime characters in the story as the story is retold. One pantomimes Jesus, another the rich young ruler, and another Peter.
- The storyteller retells the story with the participants pantomiming their part at the appropriate time.
- The storyteller invites a listener to retell the story.