

Mark 10:17-22

“Un-complicating the complicated life”

- I. **Introduction**
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I. **Introduction**

Two weeks ago I spent only a brief amount of time demonstrating the correlation between two stories that are side by side in the text but appear to be miles apart. Often the Bible seems to be like that: Random short stories disconnected to each other. But when you examine the text in detail you find something completely different, a masterful tapestry of inner connected fabric that is so connected and so beautifully placed together that I see the Holy Spirit’s inspiration on every thread. There are several clues in these two stories that indicate their connection:

1. First, is Jesus’ words with regards to the essential nature of childlike qualities as He said “***for such*** is the kingdom of God”. Then again in verse 15 He said, “*whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.*” When you examine the text concerning the rich young ruler his initial question to Jesus is, “*Good teacher what must I do that I may inherit eternal life?*” The subject matter is the same both in Jesus’ statement as well as the ruler’s question, **qualities for the entrance into the “kingdom of God”**.
2. The 2nd correlation is far subtler, as the initial question of the rich young ruler seems to indicate that he had to have been witnessing the encounter Jesus had with the children and His disciples. I say this as it only makes sense to the context with regards to his question which implies self examination where he apparently felt that he was missing at least some of these qualities, how would he have known this unless he had been present during the conversation?

II. **Vs. 17 The rich, young, ruler**

Vs. 17 Luke and Matthew in their recording of this event both call this man “*the first one*” which **speaks of preeminence**. Else where the word is used for the chief of a synagogue or the head Pharisee. It is used in classic Greek to describe a great man or a prince. His address of Jesus as the “*Good Teacher*” is reversed in the Greek and is “*Teacher, Good One*” and thou a sincere compliment still implies an imperfect standard for it’s evaluation as the comparison was human not divine. I must say that I’m very impressed with this young man for three reasons:

- A. First, this young man believed Jesus’ words were true and not just an opinion of a religious leader. How easy it would have been for him to dismiss this conversation, especially if he believed that he was lacking these unspoken characteristics.
- B. Second, he did a self evaluation in which by his own comprehension he felt that he was missing the necessary characteristics. He is not of the majority that believe that they are good enough as they are for the kingdom of God, very impressive!
- C. Finally, when we compare this passage with Matthew chapter 19 and Luke chapter 18 we are given further insight as we are told that this young man came from a well to do family (verse 22) as well as the fact in Luke that he was a ruler. This is the only place in the gospels where a person comes before Jesus and leaves worse then when they came in. He may have been rich, young, a ruler and religious but he was something else and he knew it, he was empty!

As I noted two weeks ago we ought to be able to test our theory of what the child like qualities that are essential to enter into the kingdom of God by what we see displayed and not displayed in the story we are examining this morning. The first characteristic I mentioned that children every where at all times possess is **TRANSPARENCY**. I described this characteristic as *an overall approach to life, that is simple and uncomplicated. Children are what you see and they go right to the point, curious and inquisitive.* The question is, did this rich young ruler either have this quality or recognize that he was lacking it when he came to Jesus? He exhibited not only a simple directness in approaching Jesus but also an honest evaluation of himself. He had an inner yearning for spiritual truth that he realized that he was lacking and he wanted it now. Though the

rich young ruler possessed the quality of TRANSPARENCY that in no way suggests that this transparency doesn't need to receive from Jesus the answers to the question he had just posed.

III. Vs. 18-20 The definition of "Good"

Vs. 18-20 Jesus investigation begins with one word and how he had come to this conclusion, "**GOOD**". This young man had made the measurement of "GOOD" a comparison between flawed humans where one is less damaged than the other. Jesus asks, "*Why do you call Me good?*" Jesus is saying don't use this term as a means of courtesy. He never wanted people to give Him honor or title till they knew what they were saying! This young man needed to think both on WHAT good is as well as WHO good is! As I see it there were two things that need to be answered that the rich young ruler had wrong:

1. What is the base line of good?: Jesus wastes no time in addressing his assessment. There are those that want to suggest that Jesus is denying that He is God by saying, "*No one is good but One, that is, God.*" But in reality Jesus' answer is not self denunciation of deity but the opposite. Jesus in other places that Jesus spoke of His deity such as John 10:30 where He said that "*I and the Father are one.*" In Matthew 26:63-66 in His exchange with the religious leaders just before His crucifixion, He said that in the future they would see Him sitting at the right hand of the Power and coming in the clouds from heaven. The response of the religious leaders tells us that they understood that Jesus was saying that He was God as they tore their robes and accused Him of blasphemy. *The point of Jesus questioning lies in the young man's evaluation of what is good:*

- Is it a comparison between others in humanity, a percentage that we must be above others to be considered "GOOD"? Does God grade good on the "curve"?
- Or as Jesus points out to this young man is the standard God and His goodness. Does God grade good on the "cross"? This would lead this young man to realize two very important truths:
 - a. He isn't good and never will be good enough!
 - b. And the person he had asked this question to is non other than God the Son who is the only person who has ever walked upon this earth who is GOOD! That is why Jesus asks him the question, "*Why do you call me good?*"

2. **Is it possible to inherit eternal life if it is based upon our performance?:**

Inheritance is based upon relationship not performance and clearly this rich young ruler didn't grasp that. That is the reason behind Jesus quoting keeping the commandments, which he claimed to have done since he was young but yet still recognized that with regards to "*inheriting eternal life*" he was lacking.

In verses 19-20 Jesus next gives the divine precepts to which God had given man to regulate man's duty to to their neighbor. To which the young man sad that he had "guarded" those commandments which he meant that not only had he obeyed them, he had honored them his whole life. This brings us to the **second characteristic** I mentioned two weeks ago that every child every where possess, ***TEACHABILITY!*** The definition is a hunger for discovery that propels children every where beyond their fears. Children aren't afraid to tell you that they don't know something if honesty will enable them to gain what they lack. It is clear to me that he does indeed posses ***TEACHABILITY*** not only was he willing to investigate the commandments as it relates to his own application of doing something to inherit eternal life, his evaluation came back that though he had done all of these things since his youth it still had not enabled him to "INHERIT" eternal life.

IV. **Vs. 21-22 Possessed by possessions**

Vs. 21-22 This young man was dominated and controlled by what he possessed and Jesus told him that to be free he had to get rid of what he had because what he had because in truth it had him. This wasn't a plan for divesting himself of wealth, income redistribution, but for him to recognize that such pursuits were the wrong pursuit. In the bible there are 490 verses that deal with faith, more than 500 that deal with prayer but there are over 2000 verses that deal with money in the gospels alone there are 288 verses, that's 1 out of every ten. What this shows us is that God is very concerned with how we handle the resources He has given us because if we aren't careful what He has given us, will

imprison us! The third and final quality that all children possess is **TRANSFERENCE!**

The desire to apply what they have learned, another way of saying this is obedience. The question at hand is does the rich young ruler possess this trait or can we see that he came to the understanding that he didn't? Jesus told the rich young ruler that this one trait of transference was lacking. Jesus also invited him to come, take up his cross and follow him. Notice that Jesus gets to the heart of the matter in two ways:

1. First, Jesus brought him to a place where the rich young ruler would have to evaluate what he wanted more, the temporary comforts of this life or eternal life. Jim Elliot put it best when he said, "*He is no fool who gives up what he can not keep to gain what he can never lose!*" "**What value do we place on that which we can not keep?**" Obedience can only come about when we realize that the things that we value in this world are keeping us from the true riches of His kingdom!
2. Second, Jesus brought him to the understanding that inheritance is relational not performance. Jesus invited him to come, take up the cross, and follow Him. Obedience, is seen not only in a onetime decision but a daily walk where we take up that which requires us to die to self and follow after Jesus.

Upon hearing this the rich young ruler went away profoundly sad as he had great possessions. It became clear to him that he could not serve two masters! The rich young ruler was possessed by what he possessed. This rich young ruler was transparent; he was teachable but when it came down to it he didn't want to be fully obedient if it cost him what he had because he was wealthy. Did you notice that Jesus told him that in placing the right things on the throne of his heart that he would have treasure in heaven? There will be no poverty in heaven, heaven is not a place of lack it is the place of plenty.

There is one last thing I want us to realize and that is I don't believe that this is the end of the story with regards to the rich young ruler. When we look at the gospel according to Mark you quickly realize that there is almost no recorded first hand knowledge of events. The reason for this is that most of the events were told to Mark by the person who disciple him Peter. There are only two exceptions that I can find where

the writer seems to have information about the situation that only he could know. In Mark chapter 14 verse 51-52 we are told that at Jesus arrest there was a “*certain young man who followed Jesus having a linen cloth thrown around body. And the young men lay hold of him, and left the linen cloth and fled from them naked.*” This is the only reference of this incident recorded and it is believed that Mark records this event about himself, identifying the fact that he was a late follower of Jesus. The other passage is the one before us where we are told that in verse 21 that Jesus, “*looking at him, loved him...*” That kind of information could have only been known by the person whom Jesus looked at. These two verse indicated that the rich young ruler perhaps was the gospel writer Mark. He is also known as John Mark and was the nephew of a wealthy disciple named Barnabas. Mark’s mother Mary was a wealthy women of influence in Jerusalem who owned a large home there. It seems to me that Mark later reconsidered and followed Jesus whole heartedly.