

## The Rich, Young Ruler

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Each year, Forbes Magazine names the “30 Under 30.” This list highlights thirty up-and-coming inventors and entrepreneurs under the age of thirty. Elizabeth and I worshipped with someone who made this list. He demonstrated that a person could excel in the world and do so with integrity. During His ministry, Jesus was approached by a man who might have made the Forbes 30 Under 30. This man is remembered as the “Rich, Young Ruler.”

The Gospels of Matthew and Mark document the encounter Jesus had with this man. This man seems to have been as honest and genuine as anyone who spoke with Jesus. The man ran and humbly knelt to speak with Jesus. Notice Matthew’s account of the conversation that followed:

*And behold, a man came up to him, saying, “Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?” And he said to him, “Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments.” He said to him, “Which ones?” And Jesus said, “You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” The young man said to him, “All these I have kept. What do I still lack?” Jesus said to him, “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions (Matt. 19:16-22).*

We tend to analyze various events and conversations in the Bible but fail to relate them. We see this man as powerful. We do not see ourselves as powerful. In the end, the man left Jesus sorrowful. We have not left Jesus. We judge the man and move on to the next passage. Perhaps we need to pay closer attention to what is happening in the minds and lives of people when they approached Jesus. We may see we have more in common with them than we previously realized.

### Lessons from the Rich, Young Ruler

**1). The need for honest, self-evaluation.** Our society writes off the rich as being self-absorbed and thoughtless. Like most generalizations, this is not fair. This man was rich, but he was not thoughtless. He was genuinely concerned about his relationship with God. He was disciplined and careful in his life. He wanted to make sure he was doing what was required to have eternal life.

We may be too busy with life to reflect on our lives. Most people are just trying to get through the day. They do not have time for such high-minded considerations as eternal life. This is regrettable. We need to be concerned with our relationship with God and eternity. The apostle Paul wrote, “Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you

not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!” (2 Cor. 13:5).

**2). The emptiness of achievement.** As this man evaluated his life, he began to realize the emptiness of achievement. He was moral. He was wealthy. He had status. Yet, he asked Jesus, “What do I still lack?” (Matt. 19:20).

Like this man, we may be moral, wealthy, and influential. Yet, our achievements will leave us empty. Success is not enough to fill our hearts. No accomplishment will be enough to grant us eternal life. We need something more than our abilities can give. We need Jesus.

**3). Seek answers in Jesus.** The rich, young ruler had big, deep questions. Do you have big, deep questions? We all do. We want to know the purpose of life. We want to know what lies beyond death. In the oldest book in the world, Job asked, “If a man dies, will he live again?” (Job 14:14). The rich, young ruler sought answers to his questions in Jesus.

Where do we seek answers to the questions of life? Some try to find purpose in their career. Others try to find meaning through their family. Some look in nature. Others look in travel. We must learn from this wise man and seek answers in Jesus. As Peter once acknowledged, Jesus alone has the words of eternal life (John 6:68).

**4). Be prepared for Jesus’ answer.** The rich, young ruler was introspective and wise. He asked important questions. However, he was not prepared for Jesus’ answer. When the man asked, “What do I still lack,” Jesus answered by telling him to sell his possessions and give to the poor. This man never conceived of such an answer from Jesus. He left Jesus sorrowful.

Like with this man, Jesus challenges us at our deepest level. Perhaps this man thought Jesus would give him an easy answer. We tend to want easy answers. Of course, this is unrealistic. Sin is our big problem. The answer to sin is never easy but is possible with faith in Jesus.

**5). Eternal life is received through faith in Jesus.** What was the rich, young rulers’ core struggle with Jesus’ answer? Faith. What was this accomplished man lacking? Faith. How could a rich man ever give away his riches? Faith. How could a once-rich man ever go on in life after becoming poor? Faith.

Faith in Jesus is how we find purpose in life and receive fulfillment. Faith in Jesus is what enables us to give up the empty things which we often trust. Faith in Jesus is how we can face death. Faith in Jesus is how we can receive eternal life.

### **Conclusion**

The internal struggles of the rich, young ruler are quite relatable. Perhaps as Americans living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, he is more relatable than ever before in history. What became of this man? We are left to wonder. What will become of us? We get to decide how that story ends.

