

The DAILY JESUS NEWS #232

Jesus' Final Journey to Jerusalem

Jesus and the Rich Young Ruler

MK 10.17-22 (Parallel Texts: MT 19.16-22; LK 18.18-23)

17 As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what ^{MT}good thing ^Mmust I do to inherit eternal life?"

18 *"Why do you ^{MT}ask me about what is good and ^Mcall me good?"* Jesus replied.

"No one is good--except God alone. ^{MT}If you want to enter eternal life, obey the commandments."

The man inquired, "Which ones?"

19 ^M*"You know the commandments:*

*'YOU SHALL NOT MURDER,
YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY,
YOU SHALL NOT STEAL,
YOU SHALL NOT GIVE FALSE TESTIMONY,
YOU SHALL NOT DEFRAUD,
HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.'* (Ex. 20.12-16; Dt. 5.16-20)
^{MT}*"And, 'LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.'" (Lev. 19.18)*

20 ^M"Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy.^{MT}What do I still lack?"

21 ^MJesus looked at him and loved him. *"One thing you lack,"* he said.

^{MT}*"If you want to be perfect, ^MI command you to go, sell everything you have and give it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then I command you to come, and keep on following me."*

22 At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

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NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = ^{MT}, Mark = ^M, Luke = ^L, John = ^J, Acts = ^A. This "superscript ID" is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible book until a different superscript appears. In addition, *red italics identify the words of Jesus*. Old Testament quotations are CAPITALIZED.

CONTEXT DIGEST	
Location	Somewhere on the Road to Jerusalem
Timeline	March (Month 38)
Jesus' Life Context	Stage VII: Jesus' Ministry in Perea
	C. Jesus' Final Journey to Jerusalem
Title	10. Jesus And the Rich Young Ruler

COMMENT:

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The sequence of encounters and teachings by Jesus that make up the final portion of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem function as a unit to prepare students of the life of Jesus for the climax of his life on earth: passion week, the resurrection, and his 40 Days of post-resurrection ministry leading up to his ascension.

Upcoming readings will include the rich young ruler, parable of the sovereign landowner, Jesus' 3rd prediction of his death and resurrection, the apostle's argument over who was the greatest among them, the healing of blind Bartimeus and his companion, the salvation of Zaccheus, the parable of the talents, and Mary's anointing of Jesus' feet at Bethany. These are the among the best-known events in Jesus' ministry. As we shall see, they form the perfect successive prelude to passion week, and the glories that followed.

The story of the rich young ruler's encounter with Jesus is famous. It was the tale of one man who sorrowfully rejected Jesus. It also functioned in the gospel narrative as a spiritual parable of the way the entire nation rejected Jesus. This is one of the most moving scenes in the gospel. By paying close attention to the superscript ID for Matthew's gospel in the reading, you can see that he had a particularly deep insight into this encounter.

A man came to Jesus with a desire to obtain the assurance of eternal life. Many contemporary evangelists would quickly say "just believe in Jesus and you have got it!" Jesus did not. Mark pointed out that Jesus loved the young man when he gave him a very difficult command that made him turn away from the Lord. Why was Jesus so tough on this man?

The truth is that before we can be 'saved' from a perilous situation, we must understand the seriousness of our situation. In order to be saved from the peril of our sins, we must understand how deep and encompassing our sinfulness is. This was the crux of the young man's problem--he thought he was righteous in himself, rather than a sinner in need of forgiveness.

Notice that Jesus made an issue of the word "good." He asked the man, "**Why do you call me 'good?'**" Then he made the crucial point that "**there is no one good--except for God.**" One of God's purposes for the Law--beginning with the Ten commandments--was to enable people to who attempted to obey the Law to understand how sinful they were-- through constant failure to obey it.

When Jesus quoted commandments #5 to #9, summed up by the underlying principle, "**Love your neighbor as yourself,**" the man claimed that he had obeyed them all from his youth. This was clear evidence that the man was self-deluded regarding his own righteousness. He had obeyed the commandments outwardly perhaps, but had never realized the way his inner attitudes violated the spirit of the commandments. He was "dead" to God in his prideful attitude and did not even know it.

Jesus did not mention commandment #10 in his list. "**You shall not covet.**" The man coveted his own wealth. He considered it to be his own, rather than something that belonged to God. His life was in his possessions, rather than in his love-relationship with God. This was why he claimed to obey the law perfectly--which would have been no less than sinless perfection like Jesus-- yet he was empty and conscious that something was missing in his life.

Jesus' command to sell everything, give it to the poor, and follow after him was a brilliant way to expose the sin of covetousness to the man who thought he was perfect. He was rich--therefore he could not bear the thought of giving up his heart-treasure. The experience of rejecting Jesus by disobeying his command brought this young man face to face with his own sinfulness in a powerful, yet loving way. The man left the encounter with a growing appreciation of how much he needed the Savior he had just rejected.

If Jesus had not exposed the man's sin to him, he would have left him in a deluded denial of reality. That would not have been a loving thing to do. By forcing the young man to see his sin and begin to deal with it, he was offering the man the possibility of future repentance and true salvation. Jesus' tough love was true love indeed.

APPLICATION:

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Eternal life is God's free gift to those who have a right relationship with him by faith. A right relationship can only be developed with God when we first realize that we do NOT have a right relationship with to begin with. We are all sinners at enmity against him. Truly, there is no one good but God alone. It is those who are not good in themselves who desperately need Jesus to be their Savior and Lord.

This encounter is a chilling reminder that Jesus never offered eternal life to anybody as a commodity apart from a right relationship with him. We do not have the right to offer eternal life as a free gift to those who have no consciousness of their own sin and a corresponding desire to return to God with a broken and contrite spirit. Grace is free, but it is far from cheap. Jesus' loving response to the rich young ruler is a vital model for our personal witnessing.

How have you come to terms with your own personal lack of true "goodness" in God's eyes?

How does this cause you to respond to GOD'S goodness and grace?