

## A Poor Rich Man

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Mark 10:17-24 [Matthew 19:16-30; Luke 18:18-25]

We know from Matthew 19:22 this man was young. Luke 18:18 says he was a ruler (probably in the synagogue). Luke 18:23 says he was “very rich.” Putting these verses together we call this man “**the rich young ruler**.” People who knew this man might say he was a man who had it all! He had YOUTH... RICHES... and POWER— A rare combination of qualities to be found in someone who is young.

In spite of his position in society, his morality, and his religion, he recognized he did not have eternal life. There must come a point in every person’s life when they recognize three things:

1. **You are going to stand before God** (Heb. 9:27). Someone asked Daniel Webster, “What is the greatest thought that has ever past through your mind?” Webster replied: “The greatest thought that has ever passed through my mind is the thought that one day... I am going to have to give a personal account of my life before God.”
2. **You are going to spend eternity somewhere.**
3. **Eternal life is not inherent in your life**—It must be received (as a gift—Romans 6:23).

### I. **He LONGED for the right thing** (v. 17).

A. He is to be COMMENDED for coming to Christ.

1. He came to the right person.
2. He came running. There was urgency in his coming.
3. He came for the right thing—Having eternal life.
4. He came humbly—He knelt. I wish there were more reverence towards the things of God among young people today!
5. He came unashamedly—He made no attempt to hide his need. He knelt out in the open. (Not like Nicodemus who came privately at night.)
6. He came when he was young. This is the best time to come to Christ, when you have your whole life ahead of you. Many young people (and older people) are not concerned about

eternity. They think they have plenty of time. They live for only this present world.

7. He came respectfully—He addressed Jesus as “*Good master...*”
- B. He was CHALLENGED concerning his recognition of Christ (v. 18).
1. The implication— “You call me *good*, but only God is good.” (Rom. 3:12). Jesus was implying, “You cannot call Me good unless you call Me God.”
    - ➡ If Jesus was merely a man who was “good teacher,” then His words carry no more weight than the teachings of any other religious leader. But if Jesus is good, then He is God, we had better heed what He says.
  2. Notice in v. 20, after Jesus repeats the commandments, it was no longer “*Good master*” (v. 17). Now it was merely, “*Master.*” Jesus forced him to decide—“Am I God, or just another man?” Evidently, he was not prepared to accept Jesus as God.

## II. He LACKED what was necessary (vs. 17-24).

- A. What he did not lack.
1. He didn’t lack for position—he was a ruler.
  2. He didn’t lack for possessions—“*He had great possessions.*”
  3. He didn’t lack for morality. He claimed to keep commandments 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 from his youth. Jesus didn’t contradict him. Could you honestly make that claim? I couldn’t.
  4. He didn’t lack for sincerity— Jesus looked into his heart and saw he was sincere (v. 21). He knew what his response was going to be, yet he still loved him.
- B. What he did lack:
1. He lacked assurance of eternal life—Whatever else he knew or did not know, one thing was certain—he knew he did not have eternal life. It is obvious that this man associated works with salvation. He felt he must “do” something more than he was already doing to be saved.

2. He lacked a payment for his sins.
3. He lacked complete trust/faith in Christ (vs. 23-24).

➤ If this young man asked this question to the Apostle Paul during this dispensation he would have been told eternal life is a gift that is received by faith, apart from works or keeping commandments (Acts 16:31).

### III. He LEFT making the wrong choice (vs. 22).

A. His EXAM. Jesus was going to put the man to the test.

1. There must be the knowledge of sin—Jesus had to bring him to realize he had sinned—Broken God’s law. No one can be saved until they recognize they’ve sinned.
2. Jesus only mentioned the commandments that dealt with OUTWARD RELATIONSHIPS with other men. This man needed to realize his INNER relationship with God was wrong. Jesus had to show this young man his “god” was his “gold.”
3. Therefore, Jesus told him, “*Go... sell... and give*” (v. 21). Why? Jesus was testing him to reveal where his heart was (Mt. 6:21). It was as if Jesus said, “OK, if you claim to have kept the commandments, prove that you love God more than anything else in your life.”

➤ Similar to the test God gave to Abraham when he was told to sacrifice his son Isaac, whom he loved (Gen. 22). Abraham passed the test, but the rich young ruler failed.

B. His EXPOSURE. This man had an idol.

➤ “*Go... sell... and give*” (v. 21). Men who love money more than God don’t sell to give—they sell to get. That was this man’s problem. Christ’s command exposed the idol in this man’s heart—Money / riches (1 Tim 6:10).

1. He may be doing OK in his outward relationships—But he was not right with God. He had not kept the first commandment (No other gods)... or second commandment (No idols)... or tenth commandment (don’t covet).

2. If a man breaks the 10th commandment by coveting, he has automatically broken the first and second commandments (Col. 3:5).
3. Sadly, he loved his riches more than he loved God. He was concerned about keeping the commandments, but more concerned about keeping his money!
  - ➡ Wealth is not inherently wrong. Some of the greatest men in the Bible were wealthy—Abraham, David, and Solomon; and Joseph of Arimathea. But these men kept their priorities right. When money begins to determine how you spend your time, and how you make decisions, you're in trouble.

C. His EXIT (v. 22).

1. Of all who came to the feet of Jesus, this man is the only one who went away worse than he came! Ultimately, this man would go to hell because of money (v. 24 cf. Mk. 8:36-37).
2. He turned FROM Christ instead of turning TO Christ!
3. He still had all of his possessions... he was still a ruler... he was still a moral person. BUT he lacked the most important thing—He lacked Jesus and the joy salvation.

**SUMMATION:** He was materially rich—but spiritually poor. He was “a poor rich man.” Some people are so poor all they have is their money.

The Bible says, Jesus “*knew what was in man*” (John 2:25). Jesus knew money was keeping this man from trusting Him. He was trusting his money, not Jesus (v. 24). Money was his god, and therefore Jesus tested him on that very thing.

Jesus has a way of putting His finger on the specific sin that keeps a man from trusting Him for salvation. Jesus knows what is in *your* heart and *my* heart, and He tests us on that very thing. It may not be money, as it was in this young man. It may be something entirely different.

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Paul Lee Tan relates a story that appeared in a publication called *The Pilgrim*. He tells how natives capture monkeys in North Africa: They carve out a hole in a gourd just barely large enough for a monkey to place its hand in, and they fill the gourd with nuts. The gourd is then fasten to the

branch of a tree. During the night a monkey finds the gourd and reaches in to grasp a handful of nuts. However, the hole is too small for the monkey to remove his clenched fist full of nuts. He isn't smart enough to let go of the nuts. So he pulls and strains all night. When morning comes there he is, with his fist still stuck in the gourd. He is easily captured, a victim of his own greed.

That rich young ruler, and many people today are like that monkey who refuse to let go of whatever it is that they're grasping to lay hold onto eternal life! Is there something you cannot let go of that is keeping you from being saved?

In the 1930's a 23-year-old young man with a beautiful baritone voice was being used of the Lord as a soloist in churches. He was barely making enough money to survive, but loved serving the Lord. Then came an offer to join a secular music program in New York which promised big money and fame. As he prayed about signing the contract he considered he would no longer be singing for the Lord in churches, but for the world.

One day as he sat at his piano, he decided to reject the offer to sing in New York. There he composed a song that said...

I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold;  
 I'd rather be His than have riches untold;  
 I'd rather have Jesus than houses or lands,  
 I'd rather be led by His nail pierced hand.  
 Than to be a king of a vast domain  
 Or be held in sin's dread sway,  
 I'd rather have Jesus than anything  
 This world affords today.

This man's name was George Beverly Shea who became a soloist for Billy Graham crusades for many years, and was been used of God to help lead literally millions of people to Christ.

Let me ask you: Would YOU rather have Jesus than anything this world affords?