

The Rich Young Man and the Look of Love

By

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Image by Heinrich Hofmann, public domain via Wikipedia.

This story is inspired by Mark 10:17–22, Jesus and the rich man. I had to walk away. Was he kidding? No way could I give up my comfortable life and spacious home! I love my clothes and collections and my small luxuries.

I love eating food others prepare and walking away from clean-up. I enjoy all sorts of entertainments—and none of these are bad. I am a God-fearing man who keeps every commandment. I just happen to have the ability to buy almost anything I want.

I take for granted going first. Perhaps it's selfish, but we who are wealthy deserve our blessings, right? That's what I learned growing up.

Why should I wait in line? I saw nothing wrong with running up to Jesus and interrupting. I had a burning question, and I needed an answer. It made perfect sense to seek an answer from Jesus, since I believe him to be the long-awaited Messiah.

I've slowly changed my attitude since I asked Jesus what I must do to achieve eternal life. I am different in a way that unsettles my daily choices.

He asked me why I called him *good*. Instead of answering that question, I asked another. *Which commandments should I keep?* In retrospect, I wish I had answered his question. I think our discussion would have ended differently. But I cannot undo my past.

When Jesus listed which commandments I should be following, he didn't mention all ten. As I reflected later on the ones he *did* mention, I realized that I am guilty of small infractions against those very commandments. Jesus was gently pointing out areas for my growth.

I *have* killed—in the way I spoke about my neighbor, I killed his good reputation. I stole his good name. And for what? A chance to appear better before others.

I failed to honor the rabbi—a spiritual father to me. I treated his remarks with disdain and an arrogant pride unworthy of those who love God. I see now that I broke the commandment to honor my father—a person with authority over me.

I digress.

I told Jesus I had kept all the commandments, and he looked at me with love. Knowing my heart inside and out, knowing my failures better than I admit them to myself, he still looked at me with indescribable love.

That look burned itself into my heart. I had never seen or experienced such a love, communicated by a mere facial expression. I was hooked.

I walked away, yes, but his face! His face was indelibly printed on my memory.

In that moment, I had to walk away. I have many, many responsibilities and possessions. I couldn't accept his offer to follow—not abruptly like that when I have so much under my control.

I wasn't turning him down, exactly. I was turning down that crazy invitation to just drop it all and follow. No way could I do that.

Am I trying to justify my behavior and make excuses for myself?

Since that day, I have begun letting go, little by little. In small increments I am moving toward a final farewell to my disordered love for all things material. I am progressing towards finding Jesus on the road someday and accepting the invitation to follow. I keep seeing that amazing look of pure love on his face. I want to see that look again.

Wait for me, Jesus! I am coming. I just need a little more time.

Things to ponder: If I were to meet Jesus face to face, what would my question to him be today? Am I putting off following Jesus 100% by clinging to something or someone?