

Mark 10:17-23 (NIV)

- 1) First, there are facts do we know and there are facts we do not know about this “young ruler”.
- 2) What we know:
 - a) He is wealthy
 - b) Young
 - c) Jewish
 - i) He practices his faith
 - d) He has heard of Jesus and knows of His teachings
 - e) Even though he is young, he wants to know how to live forever (inherit eternal life).
- 3) What facts we do not know:
 - a) What he is a ruler of – some have hypothesized that he was a ruler in a synagogue. There are things against this. If the Synagogue were a Jewish Synagogue, they are:
 - i) He ran up to Jesus – totally out of character for such a leader.
 - ii) Showed respect for Jesus – again out of character.
 - iii) Called Him “good teacher” and fell on his knees before Jesus.
 - b) We do not know if he is a follower of Jesus – unlikely.
 - c) We do not know much about how faithful he is as a Jew other than his own estimate.
- 4) Other things we can know:
 - a) We can definitely surmise that – though in his own estimate he kept the law, he was still concerned about how to inherit eternal life (perhaps not secure in his actions).
 - b) Inside, he knew there was a chance that what he was doing was not enough to get there.
- 5) One other **very important thing** we know that has bearing here is that the Jewish mentality of that day was that wealth was a sign of God’s blessing.
 - a) Poverty on the other hand was a sign of God’s displeasure
- 6) Keep this in mind as we look at the rest of this incident – especially the disciples reactions.
- 7) What was the answer the young ruler expected?
- 8) Obviously, we really have no way to know for sure
 - a) We might assume that it was that he was o.k and on his way – nothing further to do.
- 9) Equally obvious is that the final answer was **not** what he wanted to hear.
- 10) His hopes probably soared when Jesus answered with the question regarding keeping the commandments.

Gospel of Mark – NOTES

- a) I think it is important to note here that all the commands Jesus listed were human relationship commands.
- b) He did not ask about the commands highlighting the man's relationship with God.
- c) If we attach any significance to this, the absence of those commands may highlight the disconnect between what the young man believed about eternal life and his relationship with God.

11) One other factor I think we need to explore briefly is this unique statement that Mark makes:

21 Jesus looked at him and loved him.

- a) The Greek here is agape – that brotherly love that we all should have for one another.
- b) I perceive that this is a statement that really indicates Jesus believed he was sincere in his quest for eternal life.
- c) This was not another Pharisaical trap or question to trick Jesus.
- d) It was also I think, showing that Jesus really wanted to get the right response from the young ruler.
- e) If that is true, then Jesus would also be saddened by his response as he is when we respond incorrectly to this challenge in our own lives.

12) After having his hopes somewhat elevated comes the true and totally unexpected answer –

"One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

13) For reasons we have already discussed, this must have been not only a disappointment but a confusion and a shock.

14) Regardless, there was apparently no further discussion and no other questions – just the response Mark tells us ...

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

15) Obviously, the true “cut to the heart” lesson here is contained in these two verses – what Jesus answers the man and what the man's choice is.

16) Three things are listed:

- a) Sell everything. (ridding himself of the things he likes, uses, and enjoys each day)
 - i) Now he has money – still rich but none of the things he likes.
- b) Give the money to the poor – now he cannot reclaim the possessions.
- c) Walk away from his life as he knows it and follow Jesus.

17) For this to have a “cut to the heart” impact on us, first we have to ask ourselves – What would be the answer Jesus would give us if we were to ask that question of him?

18) Second, we must search our hearts for what our answer would be – will we walk away sad or take Jesus' observation of our life to heart and do whatever was required?

Gospel of Mark – NOTES

- 19) As with the rich young ruler, if we do give the wrong response, I think we make Jesus sad.
- 20) It always strikes me odd that to solve the “what we lack” or “what we are missing” dilemma many times we must give up something,

What was the young ruler really lacking?

Do you think he ever came around to Jesus’ way of thinking or did he just “go on” hoping that what he was doing was enough?

Soul Searcher – How often do we ask ourselves what we are lacking?

How often do we allow God’s word to speak to this question?

When we get the answer (and most likely we will if we listen to God carefully) do we change or do we just “become sad and go on”?

Other

- 1) To complete this we begin in vs 24.
- 2) The disciples were amazed at Jesus’ words so He repeats them in a slightly different manner.

Mark 10:24-31 (NIV)

- 3) As Jews, as we indicated earlier, the disciples would have seen the wealth of this man and anyone who was attempting to serve God for that matter as a sign of God’s blessing.
- 4) Obviously, there were evil rich people who gained their wealth from cheating and stealing from others – these, the disciples could have understood. But this young faithful Jewish man???
- 5) They would have seen his wealth as something that brought a him closer to God and certainly not as an obstacle to entering God’s kingdom.
- 6) As a point of clarification, most translations you may be using render the verse:
"Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God!
- 7) However, some render it as:
"Children, how hard it is *for those who trust in riches* to enter the kingdom of God! NKJV
- 8) The phrase “for those who trust in riches” was added in some later manuscripts.
- 9) Probably the scribe did so to keep the statement more in context – in agreement with Jesus’ first statement.
- 10) However, to me, the lack of that phrase definitely takes it more toward the true meaning and the lesson Jesus is teaching –
 - a) Each person, rich or poor, will have something to give up.
 - i) For example, favorite hobbies, attitudes, or possessions.

Gospel of Mark – NOTES

- ii) Basically – anything that is of greater importance to us than **what God calls us to**.
 - iii) It is, I think important to get that significance – not necessarily more important than God (that would be bad) but **what God calls us to**.
 - iv) The rich young ruler was not necessarily placing his riches in front of God but, when God thru the answer to his own question caused him to walk away sad, he placed his possessions, riches in front of what God called him to do!
- 11) This amazed the disciples “even more” and they asked the more pointed and yet broad question “Then who can be saved”.
- 12) Jesus’ final answer was of course absolute and simple:
"With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God."
- 13) God will never ask us to do anything he is not willing to help us with.
- 14) Our responsibility is to be willing to try and to trust him.
- 15) We must willing, if called to do so, to give up all those things that stand in the way of our true allegiance to Him and His plan for us.
- 16) Jesus then brings this totally into focus for the disciples and I am sure, relieves their anxiety.
- 17) Jesus responds to Peter’s statement. "We have left everything to follow you!"
- 29 "I tell you the truth," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel 30 will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields — and with them, persecutions *and in the age to come, eternal life*. 31 But many who are first will be last, and the last first."
- 18) These men were not rich but what they did was give up what was most important to them for the more important thing which was God’s call for them to follow Jesus!"
- 19) Jim Elliot a missionary is credited by his wife as saying:
“He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”

How do we know if something is in this category of “being of greater importance to us than what God calls us to”?

20) A rather odd question to follow this is:

Is it necessary that we feel we are “giving up something” in order to truly be in sync with the lessons of these verses?

Why? Why not?