

### Jesus Talked to a Rich Young Ruler

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand what Jesus taught about His plan for a Godly marriage. In this topic, we will see how Jesus answered a young man who wanted to know how to inherit eternal life.

We see that, as Jesus was talking, some parents brought their little children to see Jesus. Matthew 19:13-15 says, “Then little children were brought to Him that He might put *His* hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.’ And He laid *His* hands on them and departed from there.” The word translated “little children” may be a recently born child or one who is somewhat older. This is the word that is used for Jesus, both in Matthew 2 and Luke 2. It can also be used to speak of spiritual children as it is in John 21:5, where Jesus spoke to the disciples as they were fishing, and in 1 John 2:13, when it is speaking about various levels of spiritual maturity. However, in this same event, in Luke 18:15, we read, “Then they also brought infants to Him that He might touch them; but when the disciples saw *it*, they rebuked them.” In this verse, we see that these children were recently born infants.

We see that the parents wanted Jesus to put his hands on these infants and pray for them. Instead of welcoming the parents with their infants, the disciples rebuked them. The disciples knew that Jesus was talking to the Pharisees (see also Mark 10:1-12 and Luke 18:9-14). Jesus chose to use this opportunity to show that children are important to Him. He wanted everyone there that day to understand how He felt about children, including both the disciples and the Pharisees. Jesus told the disciples to let the little children come to Him. The word translated “forbid” means *to hinder, to prevent or refuse*. Jesus made it clear that He does not want anyone to hinder, or try to prevent, a child from coming to Him. Jesus then said that infants and young children are a part of the kingdom of heaven. By this statement, Jesus showed that He shows grace and mercy to young children who have not yet reached the understanding to be able to reject Jesus. This verse, and the comparable verses in Mark and Luke, provide a great message of comfort for parents who have a child die at a young age, because these verses show that Christ includes such children in His kingdom.

Jesus then used this opportunity to teach a very important lesson to everyone who was there that day. Mark 10:15-16 gives more details, as those verses say, “‘Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.’ And He took them up in His arms, laid *His* hands on them, and blessed them.” Jesus made it clear, in these verses, that every person who comes to Him must come to Him with the childlike faith of a young child. A young child does not depend on his or her own efforts to try and please a parent. Such children just come to their parents when their parents invite them to come. In the same way, every person must come to Jesus by just accepting His invitation to come and not by depending on any self-effort. We also see here, in Mark, that Jesus took these young children up in His arms and held

them. Then, He laid His hands on them and blessed them. Jesus took this time to give a blessing to each of the children that were brought to Him that day.

We also see that a young man came to Jesus. Matthew 19:16-19 says, “Now behold, one came and said to Him, ‘Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?’ So He said to him, ‘Why do you call Me good? No one *is* good but One, *that is*, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.’ He said to Him, ‘Which ones?’ 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 your mother,’ and, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” Mark gives us some additional details about the way this young man came to Jesus. Mark 10:17 says, “Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, ‘Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?’” In this verse, we see the young man came running to Jesus. We also see that he knelt down in front of Jesus.

The question of this young man shows that he had a total lack of understanding about how to have eternal life. He wanted to know what good thing he could do that would make it possible for him to inherit eternal life. In this verse, we see a very common thing that many people think. This young man thought that he could do some good thing to earn eternal life. Jesus then asked the young man why he called Jesus “good”. Jesus added that the only One who is good, is God. Romans 3:10-12 says, “As it is written: ‘There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one.’” This is a quotation from both Psalm 14:1-3 and Psalm 53:1-3. This young man had a complete lack of understanding about the fact that he was spiritually dead and did not have spiritual life to do any good thing.

Jesus had to show this young man that he had deceived himself about his ability to do good. Jesus told him that if he wanted to enter into life to keep the commandments, which meant to keep them perfectly. The young man immediately asked which commandments he should keep. The Pharisees said that they had found six hundred and thirteen commandments in the Old Testament. He also knew that God had given Moses the Ten Commandments. Jesus had to first show this young man that it was impossible to keep the law perfectly, before He could show the young man how to receive eternal life as a free gift. As a result, Jesus began by reminding the young man about the part of the Ten Commandments that deal with man’s relationship to man, which was the second part of the Ten Commandments.

Paul later gave a similar summary of the Law based on what Jesus had said when Paul wrote in Romans 13:8-9, “Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery,’ ‘You shall not murder,’ ‘You shall not steal,’ ‘You shall not bear false witness,’ ‘You shall not covet,’ and if there is any other commandment, are *all* summed up in this saying, namely, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” Here, we see that Paul pointed out the fact that any other law in the relationship with people can be summarized by loving your neighbor as yourself. Jesus showed the young man that he had not kept the whole Law by helping the young man to understand the idol that he worshipped, instead of loving God with his whole heart.

Matthew 19:20-22 says, “The young man said to Him, ‘All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?’ Jesus said to him, ‘If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.’ But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.” Here, we see why Jesus used the summary of the law given in Leviticus 19:15 and 19:18 where we read, ““You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor...You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.””” In verse fifteen, God said that a person was not to be partial to the poor or to honor the person of the mighty. In verse eighteen, God summarized the second part of the law by the statement, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” We see that the young man thought that he had kept these commandments from his youth.

Based on the context of, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” in Leviticus 19:15-17, Jesus then told the young man what to do if he really wanted to obey that command and its context. In this way, Jesus showed this young man that his riches were his idol. He needed to repent, turn from his idol, and turn to Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 1:9 says, “For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.” Jesus said, in Matthew 6:24, ““No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”” The word translated “mammon” means *treasure or riches*. Jesus showed this young man that he had not obeyed those particular commandments from his youth up. He was not willing to love his neighbor as he loved himself. That is why Jesus invited the young man to turn from his idol and to come follow Jesus instead. Jesus would have forgiven the sins of this young man if he would have repented and followed Jesus.

At that moment, the young man was faced with a choice that would reveal the condition of his heart. Jeremiah 17:9 says, ““The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked; who can know it?”” This young man had just had the condition of his heart revealed to him. He could no longer deceive himself. We read that this young man went away with great sorrow and sadness. 2 Corinthians 7:9-10 says, “Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. For godly sorrow produces repentance *leading* to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.” In the case of this young man, he did not experience Godly sorrow. Instead, he experienced the sorrow of this world that leads to death. He had great riches and those riches were more important to him than eternal life.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to explain to each person, with whom they share the Gospel, that no person can earn salvation. In contrast, each person who will come to Jesus in repentance and faith will receive the gift of eternal life. That is the message of hope we can offer to all. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to share this message with others.

