

Luke 18:19-30 — “Goodness and Wealth”

Now a certain leader asked him, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” 19 Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. 20 You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother.’” 21 The man replied, “I have wholeheartedly obeyed all these laws since my youth.” 22 When Jesus heard this, he said to him, “One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” 23 But when the man heard this, he became very sad, for he was extremely wealthy. 24 When Jesus noticed this, he said, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! 25 In fact, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.” 26 Those who heard this said, “Then who can be saved?” 27 He replied, “What is impossible for mere humans is possible for God.” 28 And Peter said, “Look, we have left everything we own to follow you! 29 Then Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, there is no one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of God’s kingdom 30 who will not receive many times more in this age—and in the age to come, eternal life.”

I. The scene

Jesus has been out among the people blessing children and telling parables when a man comes up to him asking about eternal life. This dialogue is recorded in Mathew, Mark and Luke; from this context we know this man was young, rich and a leader.

II. Theme one: Goodness

In response to the mans question Jesus says, God alone is good which hints to the first theme of this portion, goodness. This might help us address some of the following questions:

- What is goodness?
- How do I know if I am good?
- What does a good life look like?

A. The Ten Commandments

Jesus then points the man to the ten commandments. Generally speaking, the commandments can be organized into two groups, the first telling us how we should live in relation to God, the second telling us how we should live in relation to man— which is how Jesus organized them when he summed them up.

Love the Lord, your God, with your heart, mind, soul and strength:

1. You shall have no other gods before me.
2. You shall have no idols.
3. Do not carry the name of the Lord in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath, keep it holy.

Love your neighbor as yourself:

5. Honor your mother and father.
6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness.
10. You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor.

B. Do not covet

In omitting the final command, he is in essence drawing attention to it and speaking to those with “ears to hear”.

A definition of *covet* — “to wish for earnestly, to desire what belongs to another inordinately or culpably.” To covet can pertain to the *object* of your desiring or the *manner* of your desiring.

C. Love

“As Jesus looked at him, he felt love for him.” (Mark 10:21) We cannot miss this! The love Jesus has for this man is the motivational current in his dialogue.

III. Theme two: Wealth

A. The Big Ask

Jesus:

“Sell all that you have and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven.” (Luke 18:22, Mark 10:21, Math 19:21)

The disciples:

“Astonished!” (Mark 10:24)

Jesus:

“It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.” (Luke 18:24, Mark 10:25, Math 19:23)

The disciples:

“Exceedingly astonished!!!” (Mark 10:26; Math 19:25)

The crowd:

Bewildered, “Then who can be saved?!!!” (Luke 18:26; Mark 10:26, Math 19:25)

Jesus:

“What is impossible for mere humans is possible for God.” (Luke 18:27, Mark 10:27, Math 19:26)

In other words, not one of you has the authority to enter the Kingdom of God. *“God alone is good.”* You **covet** eternal life and you don’t see that it’s not yours for the taking. It doesn’t belong to you.

B. The Big Difference

Why is Jesus being so hard on the man who has sincerely asked about eternal life? Is this not a perfect tee up for Jesus to “share the gospel”? Why is this going off the rails?

What does the man desire?

— *Eternal life*

What does Jesus say is hard for the rich to enter?

— *The Kingdom of God*

Is there a difference seeking eternal life vs. the kingdom of God?

— *Yes, the King of the Kingdom is the difference.*

It’s possible to be interested in more of your life but not really interested in life with the King. When Jesus tells this man to sell all his belongings and give them to the poor he’s is not just telling him what it takes to enter but what it’s like to *live* there. The Kingdom operates this way because the King is this way!

C. The One Who Can

The punch line of this story is not that our rich young man couldn’t but that Jesus could. There is a man who lives and walks this way and he comes to you and offers you a way in. It’s not by our goodness but by his.

III. Life in the Kingdom

When Jesus talks about his Kingdom and the order of first-ness and last-ness as we know it he always blesses the lower position.

“Blessed are the poor, blessed are those who mourn, blessed are the meek, blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, blessed are the merciful, blessed are the pure of heart, blessed are the peacemakers, and blessed are those who are persecuted.”

Maybe rich people ask for more life but poor people don't want eternal life so much as a *different* life. Poor people want the Kingdom! Blessed are the poor.

A. True Wealth

“I tell you the truth, there is no one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of God's kingdom who will not receive many times more in this age and in the age to come, eternal life.”

He's not asking you to become a type of person who likes being without a family, or without a home or without financial resources. He's not even saying that wealth is bad— he's saying there is a type of wealth that is INFINITELY BETTER— and it's easy to miss.

“We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.” — C.S. Lewis

B. The Means and the Ends

The good news is that the blood of Jesus was shed *for* us, not only on behalf of us, but actually *for* us. His blood is not just the means of *entry* into his kingdom but it is the means of *life* there.

We think of eternal life in the Kingdom as an entrance to be gained but it's a life to be lived. We have access to that kind of life because his blood runs in ours.

C. The Kingdom Come

How can you covet what's already been bought for you? We are free to prefer one another, to seek reconciliation, and reveal to those perplexed people outside of His Kingdom that it's good here.

IV. Questions for Followup

— *What is the difference in wanting eternal life versus the kingdom of God? How does this play out in your life?*

— *What is God's nature? How does this effect what His kingdom is like?*

— *The Kingdom is like a treasure in a field. Do you see the treasure in the field as more valuable than the treasure in your hand?*