**Following Jesus into the Kingdom**

16 Just then a man came up to Jesus and asked, “Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?” “Why do you ask me about what is good?” Jesus replied. “There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, keep the commandments.”

18 “Which ones?” he inquired.

   Jesus replied, “‘You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, 19 honor your father and mother,’[[c](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=mat%2019&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23782c)] and ‘love your neighbor as yourself.’[[d](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=mat%2019&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23782d)]”

20 “All these I have kept,” the young man said. “What do I still lack?”

21 Jesus answered, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

22 When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.

23 Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. 24 Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.”

25 When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, “Who then can be saved?”

26 Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

27 Peter answered him, “We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?”

28 Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. 29 And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife[[e](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=mat%2019&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23792e)] or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. 30 But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first.

1. **Introduction**
   1. I had high hopes of Willem. A successful real estate business, great, believing wife – rich, young,   
      A great candidate to become one of the nexgen leaders;
      1. Was a church man, but came to me because he felt an emptiness in his life
      2. Couldn’t find strength to resist temptations
      3. Accepted Christ readily, was baptized … but soon fell away …
      4. Divorced, avoided church
   2. Here comes a rich, young ruler – prime candidate for the new movement
      * 1. Possibly a member of the Sanhedrin, influential
        2. Rich – a source of finance for the movement
        3. Young – energy to het the movement going
   3. I can imagine Peter thinking “Lord, treat this guy well”… get him on board and don’t do anything to antagonize him!”
      1. Jesus has a habit of making people uncomfortable
      2. “Lord comfort the disturbed, but disturb the comfortable”
   4. And so we have an earnest young man, wealthy -- very wealthy, indeed -- and probably because of his wealth and earnestness about spiritual matters, a person entrusted with governance in the synagogue, a ruler, a respected person in the community. And in his fine robes, immaculately groomed, he is kneeling in the dirt of the roadside at the edge of town, with a burning question on his heart.
   5. Most of the wealthy, religious people who asked Jesus public questions were trying to trick him into some imprudent statement --   
      "Should we pay taxes to Caesar?" (Luke 20:22).   
      "Why do your disciples pluck grain on the Sabbath?" (Luke 6:2).  
       "This lady was caught in the very act of adultery. Shouldn't we stone her as Moses directed?" (John 8:4).   
      But this man's question was no trick. It was a sincere question to which he needed to know the answer -- how to inherit eternal life.
      1. His religion – wealth – power had not given him what he was looking for …
      2. He has gone far beyond the Pharisees, experiencing that religion will not save him and lead him to eternal life
   6. He seemed to be sincere
      1. Ran to Jesus … publically
      2. Fell before him … sincerely
      3. A perfect evangelistic target
      4. What am I still lacking?
   7. Jesus answer was not according to the ‘school of evangelism’ .. would not cut it at bible school
   8. No emotional manipulation, no easy formula, simplistic appeal
   9. The RYR ran into a brick wall!
2. **He did not know who Jesus is**
   1. **A good teacher?**  
      Jesus was in the habit of asking such disarming questions. The young man did not recognize with whom he was talking - a teacher, and more than a teacher. He was kneeling before the one called "greater than Solomon." The young ruler saw Jesus as a moral man, a man of insight and depth, but he did not recognize His divine authority. And to make such a mistake is fatal. As C.S. Lewis made clear, Jesus is a liar, a lunatic, or the Lord. He cannot be only another teacher.
      1. And so, in this sincere young man's superficial way, he addresses Jesus as "good teacher," a somewhat improper way to address a Rabbi. The word "good" in both verses 18 and 19 is Greek *agathos*, "pertaining to meeting a high standard of worth and merit, 'good.' "[6]
      2. Jesus rebukes the young man concerning his careless address:
   2. **" 'Why do you call me good?' Jesus answered. 'No one is good -- except God alone.' " (18:19)**
      1. The young man can't understand anything else Jesus will tell him unless he grasps that our relative standards of goodness are much, much different than God's absolute goodness and God's standards of righteousness.   
         “All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like **filthy** **rags**; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.” Is 64:6
      2. Some have felt that, by these words, Jesus is somehow denying his divinity. If Jesus had meant to do so he would have replied simply that he was a sinner. But Jesus' divinity isn't the issue. Jesus is calling the young man to reflect on his words. Jesus is trying to teach him. Perhaps Jesus is trying to prompt him to reflect on who Jesus is, too.  
          As Jesus said to the woman at the well of Sychar, "If you knew ... who it is that asks you for a drink...." (John 4:10). But the man can't see, can't understand.
   3. **The only way to attain goodness is to completely sold out to God**
      1. Jesus said “By myself, I can do nothing … I only seek to please Him who sent me”
      2. “My teaching is not my own. It comes from the one who sent me.”
      3. John 14:10 “Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.”
   4. Did not realize that Jesus was the messiah … let alone God in human flesh
      1. He wanted a teachers guidance
      2. He needed a Saviour
   5. Only the life of Christ inside an individual can attain good ness.
      1. “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.!” Mat 5:48
3. **He did not know himself**
   1. He was missing an important quality … a sense of his own sinfulness … we need to be confronted with the reality of our sinfulness
      1. Not first of all to save from unhappiness, fulfilment, psychological problems but salvation from our sin … the penalty, power and ultimately the presence of sin.
      2. He didn’t offer relief from the RYR’s felt need, instead he confronted the RYR with the fact that he was an offense to God
      3. “If you wish to enter eternal life, keep the commandments”
      4. Jesus took the focus off the man’s felt need and focusses on God and slammed him up against the divine standard, as he had done in the Sermon on the Mount
   2. Suppose for a moment that the wealthy youth had never violated the commandments Jesus presented to him.   
      Suppose that he had never murdered - even with his tongue. Suppose that he had not committed adultery - even in his heart.   
      Suppose that he had not stolen - or even envied.   
      Suppose that he had never spoken less than the whole truth.   
      Even still he was unaware of his own faultiness.   
        
      Did you notice that Jesus only presented him with the parts of the Decalogue that deal with man-to-man relationships? The other commandments have to do with God-to-man relationships, and this young man had obviously not fulfilled those commands. If he had fulfilled them, he would have immediately recognized Jesus as the Son of God. But he did not recognize Jesus, and he did not tell the truth to Him about his behaviour. He was wildly naive and tragically blind.
   3. The young man's response is immediate: "All these I have kept since I was a boy" (18:21), and his answer should not surprise us. The rabbis held that the law could indeed be kept in its entirety. This might be true if you were defining the commandments as the Pharisees did, but we know from the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:17-48) that Jesus' view of keeping these commandments goes far beyond the legalistic interpretations of his time. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus relates murder to its root in anger and adultery to its root in lust.
   4. This leads to the root of his problem. Love of money.
      1. The command to love your neighbor as yourself … he could not have been telling the truth or else was deluded, because his heart was on his possessions
      2. He was not giving to the poor
   5. He also did not understand what God had said in the Proverbs ““Whoever is kind **to** **the** poor **lends** **to** **the** **LORD**, and he will reward **the**m for what **the**y have done.” Proverbs 19:17
4. **He did not know the power of money**
   1. The young man has kept all the commandments, but still senses a lack, an incompleteness, or else he wouldn't have come to Jesus in the first place. Now Jesus speaks to the young man's point of need: "When Jesus heard this, he said to him, 'You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.' " (18:22)

Jesus affirms the young man's basic problem. He would not obey … he would not submit to Christ.

* 1. But Jesus' prescription is unpalatable -- to the young man and to us. "Sell everything" and give the proceeds to the poor. If the man does this, Jesus assures him, he will have treasure in heaven. "Treasure" is Greek *thesauros*, "that which is stored up, 'treasure.' "[10] It is an ironic exchange that Jesus proposes -- exchanging fabulous wealth here on earth for fabulous wealth in the Kingdom of God.

Many in history have tried to buy their way into God's good graces -- many of the world's beautiful cathedrals, temples, and mosques are inscribed with the names of generous benefactors. But Jesus is not proposing buying anything or doing anything glorious. He isn't proposing a massive contribution to the Jesus Christ Evangelistic Association that will spread the Gospel in perpetuity.

Jesus proposes the man selling all his property and giving the proceeds to those who are least able to reciprocate -- the poor. St. James is right when he characterizes true religion: "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world" (James 1:27).

* 1. **How Money Corrupts**

The truth is that money itself has a way of polluting us, that is, tempting us to compromise our values in order to gain and retain it. "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs" (1 Timothy 6:10).

Recently, Jesus has taught his disciples about the importance of faithfulness with regard to money: "No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money" (Luke 16:13). Now his disciples have an object lesson to learn from -- an actual rich man, fabulously wealthy. Can he -- will he -- become a disciple?

Money, however, isn't the only thing that Jesus asks the young man to give up:

* **Possessions**, what money will buy, the accoutrements of wealth. A new car, a nice house, a membership in the country club, and fashionable clothing.
* **Status and influence** that wealth affords. People make way for the wealthy, hoping that some of that wealth might rub off on them. At the very least, people kowtow to the wealthy to keep from becoming their enemies.
* **Power**. Wealth is power. It buys influence. It buys others who will now let the wealthy have their own way.
* **Community leadership**. The man isn't very likely to continue as a respected ruler without his wealth. If he gives up his wealth he will be misunderstood and resented by the other influential people in his community. No, he won't be a ruler for long.
* **Family**. The young man probably comes from a wealthy family. But if he disposes of a huge chunk of the family wealth, will his siblings understand and accept it? Will his wife and family? His father or mother if they are still living?

How often have you been tempted to do things that were wrong or unethical or self-serving because of the lure of money, even a little bit of money? Money must either be controlled or it will control us. It is a sad thing when our possessions begin to possess us!

The Lord was making a frontal attack on his weakness … the sin of covetousness, indulgence and materialism.

* 1. You are telling me you love your neighbor als yourself? OK, go and give all you have to the poor! If you really love him as you love yourself that should be no problem!
  2. “Whoever is kind **to** **the** poor **lends** **to** **the** **LORD**, and he will reward **the**m for what **the**y have done.” Proverbs 19:17

1. **He did not know how to follow Jesus into the Kingdom**
   1. A man can misunderstand the divinity of Christ, be blind to himself, and misunderstand God’s grace and still be saved if he will commit to staying with God. Peter, Andrew, John, Matthew, and the others did not fully understand the Lordship of Jesus, and they certainly did not fully understand the plan of grace, but they stayed with Jesus. They were willing to commit to a lifestyle of learning Him. They apprenticed themselves to Him, for the long haul. That is the way to be saved.
   2. If you are willing to launch out with Christ on the long journey from brokenness to wholeness, if you are willing to walk all the way, every hard step, then you are a wise man, even if you are not young or wealthy.
   3. Ask the common man or woman in your community and you'll probably come up with a similar belief. You go to heaven if you do good. You go to hell if you do bad things. Well, only VERY bad things. Eternal life is a reward for what you do on earth. That's what people tell you.
   4. The young man's question betrays both his superficial understanding of inheriting eternal life, and his superficial understanding of a person's ability to do good deeds that are pure, unmixed by ulterior motives. The Prophet Isaiah scathing words 750 years before -- "all our righteous acts are like filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6) -- have somehow escaped the young man. :
   5. Notice that in the brief scope of a few verses salvation is spoken of in various terms and figures:   
      "eternal life" (18:18, 30),  
       "treasure in heaven" (18:22),  
       "entering the Kingdom of God" (18:24, 29), and   
      "being saved" (18:26).
   6. But Jesus' words don't just upset the rich young ruler. They also upset us.   
       I have heard many times the response to this passage: "That doesn't mean everyone should sell what they have, does it? If everyone did that it would result in chaos."

Obviously. But why are we even worried with the question? Do we, too, feel possessive of what we have? Do we fear that Jesus may require us to do something that would cost us too much? What are we afraid of? And why do we fear?

* 1. **Surrender all**  
     We fear because we sense that we are not fully surrendered, that's why. Jesus' words to the rich young ruler are quite consistent with what he has been saying to his disciples throughout his journeys:

"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters -- yes, even his own life -- he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26-27).

"In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:33)

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it" (Matthew 13:44-46).

"For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it" (Luke 9:24).

"Whoever tries to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it" (Luke 17:33)

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1. **He should have known God’s promise**
   1. Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his deed.
   2. Although he said he knew the Bible, and was probably a Pharisee, he obviously either did not know this principle, or just ignored it.
   3. He should have been confident in Gods provision.
   4. Like the widow who put her last two coins in the offering. She gave all she had … confident that the Lord would provide for her needs.
2. **But he went away sad** 
   1. **Then Come, Follow Me (18:22b)**

"Come, follow me," is the invitation Jesus extends to you and me

The story of the rich young ruler exposes a raw nerve in us that causes a reaction. But disposing of wealth was not all that Jesus asked the man to do.

"When Jesus heard this, he said to him, 'You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.' " (18:22)

He concludes with two commands. "Come" is Greek *deuro*, an adverb functioning as an interjection, "here, (come) here, come!"[11] The word "follow" is the characteristic word of discipleship, Greek *akoloutheo*, "' follow,' figuratively, to follow someone as a disciple, 'be a disciple, follow.' "[12]

However, I don't think that the following Jesus invites this man to do is just figurative. Jesus looked at this man and loved him (Mark 10:21). I think he is inviting the rich young man to join him on his journeys, to become one of the disciples who enjoy the immense and unspeakable privilege of spending time with Jesus and learning from him on a day-by-day basis. What a wonderful invitation!

But the invitation implicit to us is no less wonderful. We, too, are invited to come to Jesus, and then to follow him on a spiritual life journey. To enjoy his company, his presence. To be taught along the way by his Word and Spirit. To become part of his great extended family, the Body of Christ throughout the world. And to be filled with hope in the closing days of our journey as we know his promises and feel his comfort with us.

* 1. But this radical call to discipleship is too much for the rich young ruler.

"When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was a man of great wealth." (18:23)

The word translated "sad" is Greek *perilupos*, "**very sad, deeply grieved**."[13] Matthew and Mark note that the man went away sorrowful. Jesus remains standing where he is, on the verge of continuing his journey. But the earnest and rich young ruler, his face stricken with grief ("the man's face fell," it says in Mark 10:22), rises from his knees. He averts his eyes from Jesus, as I see it, turns slowly, and moves away from the band of disciples.

He cannot go with them. He cannot go with Jesus, as much as he would love to. Because he loves one thing more, and he cannot leave that to serve God.

In a very real sense he has broken the first commandment: "You shall have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3).

Nor can he obey the Shema which, as a devout Jew, he recites twice a day: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength" (Deuteronomy 6:4).

Jesus has pierced the man's naiveté, and has proved to him, and those who were privy to this conversation, that you *cannot* serve God and Money! "Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other" (Luke 16:13). It is true. And for the young man, sadly true.

But the challenge for disciples remains. My dear friend, is there anything, any hindrance, that you are unwilling to give up to follow Jesus? You may not be wealthy, but if there is something you possess, or that possesses you, laying it down is a vital part of following the Master. He must have your all. And he calls gently to you: "Come, follow me.

* 1. The disciples were given an eternal perspective of rewards in heaven
  2. You cannot give God more than he will give you. Maybe not now, but in eternity. We have a much too short view on life … life is eternal … here on earth so short.