

## The Poverty in Riches

Mark 10: 17-22

Our text today reveals a young man very eager to get to Jesus. It is apparent that he had heard of Jesus' ministry and the promise of eternal life. We will discover that this young man was blessed with all one could desire. He had wealth; he had status and position within society, and he was blessed with youthfulness. Having all of that, he possessed a desire for more. He longed to have the eternal life Jesus offered.

While most do not enjoy the riches or social status of this young man, their desires are much the same. We live in a culture that has an insatiable appetite for more. Our standing in society is often measure by the wealth and status we possess. Along with the hunger for wealth and social status comes a desire for eternal life. Those who have amassed great wealth long to enjoy their treasures for eternity. They cannot imagine existing without their possessions. In essence, "these want to have their cake and eat it too."

As we move through this passage we will discover the great hindrance wealth can present in the lives of many. Like the rich, young ruler, many want the promise of eternal life without the sacrifice necessary to receive it. On the other hand, some who possess little in this life, and have Jesus, are far richer than they can imagine. As we examine the [characteristics](#) of this young man, I want to consider: [The Poverty in Riches](#).

**I. He was Looking** (17) – [And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?](#) First of all, we need to understand the position of the man. Our text, as well as the gospels of Matthew and Luke, tells us he was rich. [Matt.19:22](#) reveals he was young, and [Luke 18:18](#) tells us he was a ruler.

- He had become very successful in life. He seemed to have it all: youth, wealth, and power. These are things most people desire. Even with all that, there was something missing. His life had a void in need of filling. We find him searching for that one thing to make his life complete.
- There is a sense of urgency about him. He came running to Jesus hoping to find that which would give him peace in his soul. He had all that one would desire to enjoy life, yet he wasn't prepared to die. He had obtained wealth and power and yet he was not satisfied.
- Many today are like this young man. They are very successful in life, enjoying good health, plenty of money, a good job, but don't possess real peace. If you are searching for peace in your soul, it can be found in Jesus. He alone can provide for that longing in the soul.

**II. He was Loyal (19-20)** – Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. <sup>[20]</sup> And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. He was living a good, moral life. It is possible that he was a ruler in the synagogue. He had followed the expectations religion demanded. He had kept the commandments from his youth.

- He was counting on good deeds and clean, moral living to secure his salvation. **Matt.19:20** – The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: **what lack I yet?** The rich, young ruler was confused and distressed. In his mind he had accomplished all that was necessary to be acceptable to God.

- It is evident our churches are full of loyal people. There are many, as he was, faithful to attend church. They live good lives and assume that is enough. This is harsh, but true: hell will be full of good intentions. **Matt.7:21-23** – Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. <sup>[22]</sup> Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? <sup>[23]</sup> And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Salvation isn't obtained through church membership, reciting Scripture, good works, or a moral life; but through faith in the Lord, Jesus Christ. You may be loyal to church, but there must be a personal relationship with Christ. You must be born again!

**III. He was Limited (18)** – And Jesus said unto him, **Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God.** While this appears an unusual statement from Jesus, it was spoken with purpose. Jesus challenged the young man's faith. He had rightly recognized Jesus as a great teacher, but the Lord knew he had yet to see Him as the Christ. The young man desired to have what Jesus offered, but failed to see Him as the Christ, the Savior of mankind.

- Unfortunately this trend continues today. Countless people believe that Jesus lived and died upon the cross. Many have no problem believing that He died for their sin and actually rose again, but fail to embrace Jesus by faith unto salvation. They desire to possess what Jesus offers, eternal life, but are not interested in turning away from the world and the desires of the flesh to receive salvation.

**IV. He was Lacking (21)** – Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, **One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.** He would have had an impressive resume. He was a man of wealth and position. He surely was well thought of by those who knew him. He was

likely the envy of many. He must've thought life was good. In the midst of all that success, he came up short – [he was lacking](#).

- Our acceptance by the Lord isn't based on earthly accomplishments. Our status in society has nothing to do with salvation. It is a free gift from God that must be accepted with an open heart. Outwardly it may appear that we have everything in order, but God knows the heart. If you are trusting in church membership, good works, or clean living to make it to heaven, you will come up short as well.
- He had religion, but no relationship. He was a leader, but had no Lord. Jesus was interested in a life that was surrendered. His riches stood in the way of salvation.
- God doesn't expect you to liquidate your assets and give all to the church, but He does expect a life of surrender. This calls for obedience. [We must take up our cross and follow Him](#). Anything that stands between you and Jesus must be forsaken. [Mark 8:36 – For what shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?](#) Without complete surrender, (denying self, bearing our cross, and following Jesus), you will be lacking before the Lord!

**V. He was Lost (22)** – [And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions](#). Here is the great tragedy of this passage. He had met Jesus and learned the way to eternal life. He chose to hold onto the life he had. He chose earthly possessions over Jesus.

- He faced a choice, just as we do. You may have to choose over money, sin, life's pleasures, family, or friends. However, before you decide, let me ask one thing: Is that choice worth your soul? There is nothing worth trading your soul in exchange.
- I find no record of this man after this day. Let's assume that he lived a long, prosperous life. There was a day, however, that death began to grip his body. His youth was now gone. His position of authority would have been surrendered to someone else. All the wealth he had accumulated couldn't prolong his life; it couldn't buy one second of time. Is it possible, lying on his death bed, he considered the conversation with Jesus years before? As he closed his eyes in death, he found himself in hell because he had chosen status over salvation. All his possessions had come up short. Don't be like the rich young ruler. There is hope for you today!
- This is a tragic account in Scripture, but it didn't have to end this way. In the midst of such tragedy, there is hope. Lastly notice:

**VI. He was Loved (21)** – [Then Jesus beholding him loved him](#). The young man was focused on his wealth and position. He wanted to be assured of eternal life, but he wasn't willing to abandon himself in order to follow Jesus. That is tragic because Jesus loved him. Certainly Jesus knew his heart. He knew the rich, young ruler had no real desire to follow Him, and yet He loved him anyway. This young man walked away from salvation being loved of Jesus.

- You are loved as well. You may be living life and seeking all this world can provide. Your focus may be consumed with the desire to obtain more than you currently possess. You maybe haven't given any thought to Jesus or the eternal condition of your soul. Regardless of where you are in life or how you feel about Christ, please know you are loved of Him. [Rom.5:8 – But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us](#). He desires to save you today.

**Conclusion:** I am thankful for the day that I met the Lord in salvation. I did not have riches to hinder me, but there was a time when the desires of the flesh consumed my life. Jesus came to me in my pitiful condition and brought deliverance through salvation.

What stands between you and a right relationship with the Lord? If you are yet unsaved, deny the flesh and come to Him in repentance and faith. He will save those who genuinely come to Him for salvation. Maybe you are a believer, but have allowed the pleasures of this life to hinder your relationship with Christ. Bring that to Jesus today. He stands ready to forgive and restore!