The Rich Young Ruler

Zanesville, OH | July 29, 2018 | Sermon Notes

**Foundational Scripture:** Matt.19:16-22; Mark 19:17-22; Luke 18:18-23

**Intro**:

* The rich young ruler is a very popular story that has attracted the attention of the masses ever since its mention in the scriptures. Preachers and teachers alike have devoted countless minutes to its lessons and applications that they in turn can provide to their respective religious groups or bodies. While the story itself is of much value, what we want to consider tonight is more of a structural view of the linguistic literature itself and what we can learn from it.

**The Meeting with Jesus**

1. **Asks the right question: *“What Shall I do to inherit eternal life”* (Matt. 19:16; Mk. 10:17; Lk. 18:18)**
   1. The scriptures do not expound much on the background of this young ruler save for the fact that he is a man in a position of authority. Immediately upon his interaction with our Lord, he presents a striking question.
   2. The nature of his question immediately solicits the attention of Jesus and His followers. It is not a misguided or wayward one but rather it is one that seems rather desperate and valuable to the ruler. ***“What shall I do to inherit eternal life?”***
   3. The beginning structure demonstrates that he has asked the right question. Many people have had the opportunity to approach Jesus and interact with him and even ask him questions, but they asked wrongly (ex. Pharisees).
2. **Asks the right way: *“…ran up to Him and knelt before Him”* denoting a sense of urgency and importance (Mk. 10:17)**
   1. The text emphasizes that he ran up to Jesus and knelt before Him. This aptly indicates his desire to have his question answered.
   2. The manner in which he approached Jesus indicates a level of respect for Him (probably having heard of Jesus) but also illustrates the sense of urgency he possesses that his important question be answered. He is rather desperate looking to Jesus for help.
3. **Asks the right person: *“Good Teacher”* referring to Jesus (Matt. 19:16-17; Mk. 10:17-18; Lk. 18:18-19)**
   1. Consider that this is a man in a position of authority. There are quite a few examples in the gospels of men serving in a position of authority yet seeking out Jesus for answers to their needs (Matt. 8:5-13; 9:18-19, 23-25; Jn. 3:1-21).
   2. The point of these illustrations including the rich young ruler is that though they have power and authority to a certain extent, they still need Jesus and His words. The way the young man addresses Jesus invites us to ponder on the phrase he said ***(“Good Teacher”)***.
   3. Jesus is not seeking to deny that He is indeed good (Jn. 10:11, 14), but rather He seeks to draw our attention to the everlasting reality that no matter who we are, we are all in desperate need of God!
4. **Makes the wrong decision: *“…when he had heard these things he went away grieving”* (Matt. 19:22; Mk. 10:22; Lk. 18:23)**
   1. Jesus does not disappoint the young man and He answers his questions (Matt. 19:18-21; Mk. 10:19-21; Lk. 18:20-22) but Jesus’ answer does not meet his expectations.
   2. Jesus always spoke the truth and He spoke righteously. The young man was a seemingly upstanding moral citizen of society, but he loved his property more than he loved God.
   3. He wanted Jesus to give Him a checklist that he could work through and at the end he could have eternal life. His response to Jesus’s answer indicates that he did not understand the true nature of eternal life and what it required.
   4. The literary structure of this story is setting us up for what seems to be a happily ever after ending. He asks the right question in the right way to the right person and so all that’s left is to make the right decision except we are left wanting for that part.

**What the Rich Young Ruler teaches Us**

1. What kind of questions are we asking? (Ones that will help us be better or bitter)
2. In what manner are we asking these questions? (Apathetic or urgent)
3. To whom do we express our concerns? (It is important to know that only God has all the answers to our problems and our needs).
4. Are we willing to make the right decision when faced with the truth?