

## Sermon Discussion

### 3 April 2022

Read Luke 18:18-30

#### Dig Deeper

In v. 18, the young man believed he could do something **to earn** eternal life, and he wanted to make sure he had not overlooked it. To obtain eternal life meant to enter the kingdom (*see John 3:3-5*). The Gospels of Luke and Mark both have him using the word “**inherit**” (Greek “*kleronomeso*”) while Matthew wrote “**obtain**” (Greek “*scho*”). Mark and Luke probably used the word “inherit” for their Gentile readers to clarify what was in the rich young ruler’s mind. He was talking about getting something that he as a Jew thought that he had a good chance of obtaining because of his ethnic relationship to Abraham.

The rabbis taught that people could keep the Law in its entirety. Jesus cited the fifth through the ninth commandments from the Decalogue (or 10 Commandments) that deal with a person’s responsibilities to his or her fellowman (*see Exodus 20:12-16*).

Jesus then presented him with the higher hurdle (for the young man) of not coveting, the tenth commandment. Jesus’ command exposed the man’s greed, which is idolatry (*see Colossians 3:5*). If he had been willing to give away his possessions, he would have shown that he was **overcoming his greed**. By following Jesus, he would have shown that he was repudiating his own self-righteousness. These would have been the appropriate fruits of his repentance.

Luke alone mentioned that Jesus looked at the young man and then spoke. He probably did this to make the connection between Jesus’ comments that followed and the young man’s attitude clear to his readers. Jesus said that wealth makes it **difficult, but not impossible**, for rich people to obtain salvation. Riches are a handicap because they present two temptations to the wealthy. **First**, the rich sometimes conclude that because they are rich they are superior to the poor, perhaps more blessed by God, and therefore do not need God’s grace. **Second**, they may conclude that because they are rich they are secure, and therefore they fail to plan for the future beyond the grave.

Jesus responds that everyone who denies himself or herself the normal comforts and contacts of life to advance God’s mission will receive **a greater reward** from God for doing so. That means that one will receive deeper spiritual comfort and more satisfying human contacts in the present life; in addition, he or she will receive an even better and enduring life in the coming kingdom.

1. What do we know about the man who approached Jesus in this passage? What does Luke tell us about him, and what can we infer from his words and actions?

2. Look at Exodus 20:12-16. Which of these commandments does Jesus list in Luke 18:20, and which does he leave out? What significance do you see in this?
3. In v. 23, Luke tells us that the ruler “became very sad”...not hostile or defensive, but sad. Why do you think he felt this way?
4. How does the crowd react to what they have just seen and heard? What does Peter say? Why do you think they respond this way?
5. It’s easy for us to become captive to the things we own. Why do you think money and material possessions can exercise such a hold on minds, hearts, and imaginations?

### **Application & Prayer**

- What are some of the fears, attachments, desires to control, or notions of entitlement you have struggled with?
- How might “fasting from stuff” in some way (buying stuff, keeping stuff, and fantasizing about stuff) help us to follow Jesus more wholeheartedly?
- Jesus’s teaching here is hard. Maybe even impossible, on our own. But as Jesus said to Peter, “What is impossible with man is possible with God” (v. 27). Consider praying this prayer for someone in your group: “May God be with you as he releases the chains of what is holding you captive today. Amen.”