

Behold He Loved Him

Mark 10:17-24 *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? (18) And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God. (19) 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. (20) And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. (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. (22) And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions. (23) And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! (24) And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!*

This is an interesting episode that happened during Jesus' ministry. A man rushes up to Jesus and kneels before him, wanting to know what things he should do to obtain eternal life. From Matthew's account we learn that he is a young man (Matthew 19:20). From Luke's account we learn that he is a ruler (Luke 18:18). Since no country is mentioned over which this young man ruled, many conclude that his authority was a position in the synagogue, which normally is reserved for elderly Jews and that his wealth, mentioned in all three accounts, probably accounts for his position.

Regardless, this young man approaches Jesus, but he didn't simply come up to Jesus. V17 tells us that he came running up to Jesus. He was eager to meet with Jesus. Not only did he run to Jesus but when he got there he knelt down before him. His running and kneeling before him denoted respect along with a sense of urgency and importance. He might be described as one hungering and thirsting after righteousness.

In addition, this young man showed respect to Jesus by addressing him as Good Master. **(18) And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God.** Jesus points out that only God is truly good; therefore, by referring to him as "good" the young man was unknowingly calling Jesus God as he asked the all important question, ***"What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"***

Keep in mind that while Jesus lived on earth, he lived under the Law of Moses so in answering the young man he tells him to keep the commandments as he mentions five of the ten and alludes to others by saying *"defraud not"* to clarify what he is talking about. This is an important principle for us to grasp. While we are no longer under the old law of Moses and the Ten Commandments, we are still expected to keep the Law of Christ, i.e. commandments of Christ. Jesus said **John 14:15** *If ye love me, keep my commandments.* Later in the life of John he would write **1 John 5:2-3** *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. (3) For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.* So, for us to inherit eternal life we too are expected to keep the commandments of God and/or Jesus.

However, this was not specific enough for the young man. He knew that he kept these commands, but he also knew within himself that something important was missing. Jesus understood his sincere desire to do what was right. It was this attitude that led to verse 21. **Then Jesus beholding him loved him.** Now in a sense Jesus loves everyone because he was willing to die for all, not wanting any to perish. Paul would say **(1 Timothy 2:3-4)** *For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; (4) Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.* But it seems there is something special about the

person who is seeking the way of righteousness. This man came running to Jesus and while kneeling asked what he needed to do. How we would love to meet such people today. If that were to happen to you, what would you say?

Mark mentions that Jesus answered him out of love (v21). There was one thing lacking in his life which would make him complete. If he would go and sell all he had, give to the poor, then he would be assured of eternal life. Jesus then even invites him to join his disciples, something Jesus has done only a few times. He said ***come, take up the cross, and follow me.***

Jesus is not saying that everyone must sell everything they have to be a disciple of his. He is pointing out to this young man where the source of his greatest hindrance to righteousness was. This man valued his wealth too much. 1 Timothy 6:9 speaks of riches as a “snare” which “drown men in destruction and perdition.”

Sadly, we see that Jesus was correct. The young man could not make himself do this one thing, even though he was assured that he would have eternal life if he did it. Even here we see the hint of the good in the young man, for he did not scoff at Jesus’ command. It grieved him that he wasn’t able to find within himself the ability to carry out the command.

It is something we should all consider as well. Is there something that we hold dearer than life itself, something that we couldn’t bring ourselves to give up, even for heaven? Jesus told in the Sermon on the Mount that man needs to remove whatever it might be that hinders him from obeying the gospel. ***Matthew 5:29-30 And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. (30) And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.*** In our text it was the man’s wealth. ***(22) And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.*** The young man went away. No doubt Jesus was saddened because he loved the young man; remember v21. But he let the man go. The young man “went away grieved.” Try to imagine standing there. A few minutes this young man came running up to Jesus with excitement and enthusiasm, but now Jesus stands as he watches this man walking slowly away as he hangs his head low shaking it from side-to-side.

Point to be made is that Jesus let him go. Jesus never, nor should we, force people to obey. While not stated, don’t you know that Jesus too was disappointed? While we may try to persuade people, the choice is theirs to make. ***2 Corinthians 5:10-11 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. (11) Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, WE PERSUADE MEN; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.*** Because there is going to be a judgment, we try to persuade men to prepare themselves.

As you do personal work, get ready for your heart to be broken and your emotions crushed as you deal with disappointment. People you care about, maybe even love as did Jesus, do not have the conviction that you do. They don’t see the need and urgency that you do. They, like the rich young ruler may turn away. But listen to what Paul wrote, ***1 Corinthians 15:57-58 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (58) Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.***

We see this in the life of the apostle Paul. There was a time when Paul was arrested and appeared in a court hearing before Governor Felix. ***Acts 24:24-25 And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. (25) And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way***

for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee. Here was a man touched by the gospel message regarding righteousness, temperance (self restraint) and judgment to come. He trembled at the message because his inner man must have been touched and convicted. But rather than asking “What must I do” he said go away; I’ll call for you later when it is more convenient. The best we can tell from history, Felix never obeyed the gospel. Don’t you know that discouraged Paul? But it didn’t stop him.

The next two chapters we find him talking to King Agrippa. He tells about Jesus and details his conversion and concludes by saying, “*Acts 26:27-28 King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. (28) Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.*” Again history indicates that Agrippa never became a Christian.

The rich young ruler went away grieved and Jesus let him go. This young man was the type we might like to have in the church. He was young which meant he had some energy and enthusiasm. He was wealthy which means he might help us meet our budget. He was godly as he kept the commandments from his youth. He was a man of authority and would likely be willing to take a lead. Likely we might have reached out to him and wanted to negotiate or maybe even softened the command given by Jesus just to get such a person. But Jesus let him go.

From history we know that in AD70 (some 40 years later) that Jerusalem and surrounding area was destroyed by the Romans and the Jewish nation was destroyed. Since this man was young it is reasonable to think that he was a victim of that destruction. If so, his wealth that he considered so precious perished. In comparison to what Jesus was offering, this young man’s wealth was a short-lived.

Commenting on the departure of the young man, Jesus noted how hard it is for a rich man to enter heaven. *(23) And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!* It would be easier for a camel to get through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to get into heaven. The phrase suggests something that is essentially impossible to accomplish. It is not wealth itself that keeps men out of heaven, for there have been many wealthy men in the past who were servants of God, such as Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, and Job. Rather, it is the love of wealth and the conflict of interest which causes the problem. Mark’s account makes this clear (Mark 10:24).

The very thought astonished the disciples. *(24) And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!* They were used to seeing rich people get anything they wanted. Surely they had no hindrance in entering heaven if that is what they wanted. If the rich aren’t able to be saved, with all their advantages, then who could be saved?

Jesus pointed out that left on their own, it would be impossible for men to save themselves, but with God all things were possible. Salvation will be given to the obedient. *Matthew 7:21 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.* Perhaps you are here and need to obey the gospel.

Invitation