

Seeking Life's Greatest Treasure

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[0 : 0 0] opportunity and runs to Jesus, falls on his knees and says, Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life? Jesus immediately responds to him and says, Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.

I think it's worth pausing here for a moment and considering Jesus' response to this man. Have another look at verse 18. Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.

Jesus is asking the man if he realizes just what he's saying when he calls him good teacher. If no one is good except God alone, yet Jesus is perfectly good, what does this mean? I think Jesus is saying to this man that he is right in calling him good, but what he has failed to realize is that Jesus is also God.

No one is good except God alone. Jesus is good because Jesus is God. And that's important because it turns out that the rest of us aren't as good as we think.

This rich man is a perfect example. Let's read on. Verse 18. You know the commandments. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery.

[1 : 1 1] You shall not steal. You shall not give false testimony. You shall not defraud. Honor your mother and father. Teacher, he declared, all these I have kept since I was a boy. Jesus looked at him and loved him. One thing you lack, he said.

Go sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come and follow me. At this the man's face fell. He went away sad because he had great wealth.

Think back to the man's initial question. What must I do to inherit eternal life? Though Jesus lists the commandments, the answer to this man's question is not actually found in these commandments, but is found instead in Jesus' first response.

No one is good except God alone. You see, Jesus is trying to get this man to see that he, like everyone else, is not as good as he thinks. In fact, he's not good at all. Jesus spells it out for him clearly, but the rich man still doesn't get it.

And that's made obvious because the rich man goes on to tell Jesus that he's kept all of the commandments in verse 19, but doesn't realize that Jesus only mentioned the commandments to expose his sin.

[2 : 2 3] So what's the sin? The rich man seems like a good bloke. I mean, he's kept all the commandments, hasn't he? But if we read verses 21 and 22 again, Jesus reveals to us how this man, though seemingly righteous, has actually fallen short and failed to keep the commandments.

Who can remember the first and the second commandment? The very first commandment is to have no other gods, but God alone. And the second is to not bow down and worship any idols, because our God is a jealous God.

Both of these commandments the rich man has failed to keep. But what is this man's God and what is his idol? It's his wealth, isn't it? Because he prioritizes it over God.

Two chapters later in Mark, chapter 12, verses 30 and 31, we see that Jesus summarizes the commandments. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength, and you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

There is no commandment greater than these. Jesus is quoting from Deuteronomy 6 that we read earlier. You see that the rich man completely misses the whole point of the Ten Commandments, to love the Lord your God with everything.

[3 : 35] Because when Jesus tells him in verse 21, Go sell everything you have, give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come follow me. He cannot do it.

He won't do it. We see his response in the very next verse. He went away sad because he had great wealth. The rich man would rather hold on to his wealth instead of loving God and leaving everything behind.

Jesus challenges him to sell everything, give to the poor, and to follow him, not because there is anything inherently evil about being wealthy, but rather Jesus is targeting the idolatry in this man's heart, his precious wealth that he refuses to let go of.

To be honest, I think the rich man should actually be called the poor man because he has traded the everlasting God and his eternal kingdom for earthly prosperity. If God is the greatest treasure, and I'm convinced of this, this poor man has swapped God for something fleeting and temporary, that is, cheap treasure.

So how can the rich man enter God's kingdom if he has no place for Jesus in his heart right now and refuses his call to follow him? I love this quote by John Piper.

[4 : 51] The critical question for our generation and for every generation is this. If you could have heaven with no sickness and with all the friends you ever had on earth and all the food you ever liked and all the leisure activities you ever enjoyed and all the natural beauties you ever saw or the physical pleasures you ever tasted and no human conflict or any natural disasters, could you be satisfied with heaven if Christ were not there?

It's worth thinking about. If heaven was everything you ever wanted, but Christ was not there, would you be satisfied? Or would it be heaven at all?

That's certainly a challenge for me because when I often imagine heaven, I think of a place where there's eternal happiness and joy and no longer any suffering, a place where we are united once more with our friends and family, and a place where we can enjoy the best all-you-can-eat buffets and still maintain six-pack abs in our new and glorified bodies.

But where's Jesus in my heaven? Do I actually value all these things more than I value Christ? More than I value the presence of the living God? If we can't love and enjoy Jesus more than anything now, how will we enjoy his presence in heaven?

So friends, consider this with me. What is it that you enjoy and treasure more than Jesus? Do you treasure your career? Money, popularity, comfort, like this rich man?

[6 : 20] Or perhaps entertainment? Or perhaps even the relationships in your life? Because here's the thing. It's hard to enter the kingdom of heaven whilst treasuring these other stuff, refusing to let go.

See what Jesus says from verse 23 through to 25. Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, How hard is it for the rich to enter the kingdom of God? The disciples were amazed at his words, but Jesus said again, Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God.

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. How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom because they're holding on to cheap treasure instead of holding on to God.

Not only that, the rich man cannot enter the kingdom because he is relying on his own goodness to save him. Notice what Jesus says to his disciples in verse 25.

Jesus says, Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God. 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.

[7 : 28] And their response in verse 26, The disciples were even more amazed at this and said to each other, Who then can be saved? You see, the disciples want to know who can be saved because in their eyes, this rich man was the likeliest of them all because they thought the rich people were blessed people, people who are generally favored by God and therefore most likely to be good people.

And if good people couldn't get eternal life, what hope would there be for not so good people? But Jesus has already answered their question for them. Remember, no one is good except God alone.

No one can enter the kingdom. The disciples are right. It is impossible. That is, no one can enter if they rely on their own goodness to save them. But they're not completely left without hope, are they?

Notice what Jesus says in verse 27. With man this is impossible, but not with God. All things are possible with God. Though it is impossible for a rich man or impossible for a poor man to enter the kingdom based on his own merits, God is able to do the impossible and save him.

God is able to save those who trust in him, who love him, who have him as their greatest treasure and depend on him for their salvation, like little children. See the way Jesus addresses his disciples in the beginning of verse 25?

[8 : 54] Children. Jesus hasn't just randomly decided to refer to these grown bearded men as little kids, but he addresses them in this way deliberately because he wants them to see that this is who they are.

Little children who have left everything and depended on Jesus to lead them into the kingdom. Jesus has already tried to show them this. Right before this in verses 13 to 16, Jesus taught his disciples that you needed to come to him like children.

When the disciples were found, ironically, chasing away the little children, Jesus, indignant at the way his disciples were behaving, said to them, Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it. See what Jesus is saying? The kingdom belongs to those who come like little children, who come without a claim to their own righteousness, to those who come without a claim to their own goodness, to those who come without a sense of their own power or contribution.

That's why the rich man cannot enter the kingdom, because instead of coming to Jesus like a child, begging, God, please save me, he comes to Jesus asking, What can I do?

[10 : 14] Not, I come with nothing, but God, but what can I do? He assumes he can work his way into the kingdom, but he can't. He's not good enough.

No one is. And so no one who wants to work their way into the kingdom will ever be able to get in. No one who wants to be good enough to enter the kingdom will get in.

And no one who thinks they can buy their way into the kingdom can get in. Only those who love God and prioritize him above everything else can enter the kingdom of heaven. That's the point Jesus made earlier.

And you see in verse 28, Peter's picked this up and makes the point, We have left everything to follow you. And so they have. They left their family, they left their friends, houses, as well as their jobs.

And Jesus accepts it. This is the kind of faith that he loves and accepts. Not a self-righteous kind of faith, but a humble childlike faith that considers God its greatest treasure and leaves everything behind to follow him.

[11 : 17] Not only does Jesus accept it, but he comforts them with the reality that is seen in verses 29 through to 31. Truly I tell you, Jesus replied, no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me in the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields, along with persecutions and in the age to come, eternal life.

This is the same comfort for us who have made Jesus our greatest treasure. For those who echo what Peter is saying, we have left everything to follow you. Jesus promises us much more, many times more, even a hundred times more than what we've lost.

And not just in the age to come, not just in eternal life, but here right now. Now I might be wondering where these treasures are. I still only have one brother. I still only have one mother.

I still only have one father. I don't have multiple fields, although I didn't start with any. But the fact is, I do have these things. There are Christians who mother me. There are followers of Jesus who father me.

There are brothers in Christ who love and encourage me. And when it comes to fields, that is, when it comes to working a job, Jesus has given me so many opportunities to serve him and to grow his kingdom.

[12 : 39] This is kingdom treasure. Brothers and sisters and fathers and mothers and work that will last into eternity. Treasure that will not rot or fade or be taken away by lawyers or courts and that no amount of money can buy.

Treasure that is worth so much more than earthly prosperity. Of course, for now, just a little while, it comes with persecution. We see that in verse 30.

We get this treasure, but for now, we also get the same sort of persecution as the Jesus we follow. As the master, so the disciple. What's good for Jesus is also good for us.

It's good for us so that we don't mistakenly think that anything bad that happens to us is outside of God's plan for us. But rather, God's good plan includes the possibility of persecution.

Not only that, persecution brings God's blessing to us as well. Remember the Sermon on the Mount? Matthew 5, verses 10-12.

[13 : 41] Jesus says, Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.

Rejoice and celebrate, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets before you. Persecution brings a blessing, because it shows that you're following your master, and you're following the prophets who went before you.

This is what it means to love God, to have your heart set on him, and then to follow him. As the master, so the disciple. So what does this mean for us today?

It means that we know and understand that God is and should be our greatest treasure. And you only get access to God and his kingdom by loving him more than anything else, and like a child, trusting him to do the impossible and save you.

Relying on your own goodness or treasuring anything above God will only prevent you from entering the kingdom. And finally, it's worth it. It's worth following God with amazing benefits in this life and the life to come.

[14 : 56] So friends, let me encourage you. Let Jesus be your greatest treasure. Don't be like the rich man and try to buy eternal life with good works. Don't end up poor by turning your back on God for the sake of cheap, earthly treasures like wealth and prosperity.

Enjoy the salvation and the eternal life that has been won for you and gifted to you through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Enjoy the blessings of the family of God, the fathers, the mothers, the sisters, and the brothers around you in this church and in the church around the world.

And take comfort in the blessing of God as you were persecuted for following Jesus. You have heaven, you have eternal life. You have blessings in this life and the life to come with God as your treasure and heaven as your home.

Let's pray. God, thank you that you have given us eternal life in all the blessings now and in heaven. But above all, thank you that we can know you and see that you are worth more than anything else in our lives.

and I pray as we walk out from this building that we may remember it, that you are greatest treasure now and forever. Amen.