

The Love of Money – The Rich Young Ruler

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Jesus and the Rich Man Series – Part One

The Rich Man is the third of five characters whose stories open my book, All Men Are Desperate Whether They Admit It or Not. Since this platform provides further opportunity to expound upon Jesus' teachings on the subject, this is the first of three parts. I pray each lesson reaches you where you are and reveals all God wants you to examine in your own heart on what is often a more difficult subject to receive than it is to teach.

The subject of "a man and his money" draws a wide array of treatments in the church. Some tread lightly, concerned with feelings of large contributors whose large gifts can adversely affect cash flow should that person get upset with what is said and withhold them. Others deal with it straight up as the Bible does.

Jesus spoke frequently and directly on this subject—totally unencumbered with what men thought or how it would affect their egos or giving to God.

The following conversations feature Jesus' clear and straightforward teachings on men and their wealth. His words still produce heartburn and discomfort in the bellies of some men of great means today, just as they did when He first spoke them.

The Love of Money – The Rich Young Ruler (Matthew 19)

Most Christians know this story. It is told by each of the three synoptic gospel writers: Matthew, Mark, and Luke. That

says something about the importance of this theme—the love of money.

This rich young man approached Jesus and asked a question that immediately revealed an error in his thinking. *“What must I **do** to inherit eternal life?”* After an exchange in which the man defended the “good” life he lived, Jesus took him down a road he never anticipated—*being* rather than *doing*. The condition of his heart—not his head.

We know Jesus instructed him to sell all he owned, give the proceeds to the poor, and then come follow Him. The man was devastated. That was not the answer he expected. Like some church men of means today, he wanted to be affirmed in his good deeds without any challenge to his lifestyle. In today’s business jargon we might say,

“The rich young man did not like the term sheet Jesus offered—the cost-benefit ratio was too great.”

His response tells it all. The Bible says, *“He went away sad because he was stinking rich.”* (my paraphrase)

After the rich young ruler walked away, Jesus apparently repeated the following that stunned all who heard it, including His disciples:

“Again I tell you, 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.” (Matthew 19:24 NIV)

Jesus’ confronted the man in a way that revealed the true object of his worship—wealth. This man spent his young life building a portfolio. The thought of liquidating it to give to the poor seemed patently absurd. That thought rings true today for ***men whose god is their wealth.***

Nowhere in the Bible does it say, *“money is the root of all evil.”* It **does say** “the LOVE of money is the root of all

evil.” (1 Timothy 6: 10) This man loved his money more than his relationship with God.

In His teaching on the same subject in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said,

“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.”

(Matthew 6: 24 ESV)

So where is our out-clause—the part at the end that makes us feel good about ourselves and gets us off the hook Jesus so deeply embedded in the jaw of this rich man? I have bad news. There is not one. Throughout His teaching ministry, Jesus used questions to allow men to set themselves up. Then He came in with truths that would convict or call them out—always leading them to a decision point.

This man’s issue was a condition of a selfish heart. Jesus offered him hope, just as He does all of us. The man turned his back on Jesus and walked away very lost and without hope. The problem remains today—many men do not like the terms of Jesus’ offer. So, they walk away.

Today, I implore you. Do not turn your back and walk away from Jesus Who loves you unconditionally and offers eternal life based on His death. God’s term sheet demands death for sin. We can never do enough ‘good’ to settle our account. Jesus paid the price in full. That is why He had the right to demand what seemed so much from the rich young man. He has the same right and expectation of all who claim to know Him as Savior and follow Him as Lord.

Ask yourself this question. *Has your wealth become a god you serve...whether you admit it or not?*

Walter