

The Rich Young Ruler

Dear Mark,

Have you ever read the Gospel of Mark? There is a certain story in chapter 10, from verse 17 to verse 25. It's all about how one enters into the Kingdom of God. As verse 24 says, how hard it is for those who have riches to enter into the Kingdom of God! It's all about your heart and soul.

*But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, **that they may lay hold on eternal life.** (1 Tim 6:9,17-19)*

It's all about where your heart is, Mark. Have you read Mt 6:21? "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Who said it and whose voice are you listening to now? (Jn 18:37; Jn 10:14,27) Where is your treasure? (Mk 10:21)

Look at Mt 13:44-51. What does verse 51 say? Also look at Mt 13:34-35. These things seemed to be hidden from you, as they are from most people who cannot see their essence. For those who perceive the essential value of the Kingdom will ransom or sacrifice anything to obtain it (Mt 16:24-26; Phil 3:8).

What can be compared to the value of eternal life? Is there anything even worthy of comparison, anything comparable, anything having common characteristics which would make it worthy of comparison? What can be compared with it? What is like it to any comparable degree, or even worthy to be estimated in comparison with eternal life? What is relative to it, in any comparable degree? As Mt 16:26 says, "*For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? For what will a man give in exchange for his soul?*" So what can be compared to the value of eternal life?

The call to eternal life is the call to discipleship (Mt 10:34-38; Lk 14:26). To become a disciple is to obey and take total and absolute identity with Yahshua — even unto death. It is not just to bear some burden imposed by Him. But our Master knows who He can give eternal life to — only those who will follow Him and serve Him where He is (Jn 12:25-26). Our Master demands absolute allegiance. That takes priority over all natural ties in life (Mt 10:37-39; Lk 12:49-53). This is part of the gospel, which must be obeyed (2 Ths 1:8; Acts 5:32).

So the essence of the gospel, the good news of the Kingdom, is as Mt 10:38 and 16:24. This is the call to become one of Yahshua's disciples. Lk 14:33 is emphatic and definitive, and demands that one completely abandon (abdicate) all of one's own natural power, authority, influence, money, family, property, and all desires to be rich (1 Tim 6:9,17-19). This includes the desire to have one's own comfort or fame...

But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe to you who are full, for you shall hunger. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets. (Lk 6:24-26)

These woes correspond to the blessings in the previous verses:

Then He lifted up His eyes toward His disciples, and said: "Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you, and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven, for in like manner their fathers did to the prophets. (Lk 6:20-23)

"Woe" means *doom* (Eze 34:2). The disaster in the end cannot even be compared with the comforts of Lk 6:24-26 in this present life.

Acts 10:36-37; Mk 1:14-15 — Our Master Yahshua brought the good news concerning the preparation for the Kingdom (Mt 21:43; 24:14). To believe the gospel is to believe the gospel of the Kingdom of God. *The Good News of the Kingdom of God* is the true gospel. The Gospel of Yahshua is the gospel He brought as God's messenger, and the

gospel He proclaimed is the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. The Gospel of Yahshua the Messiah is not about *Him*, for it is *His* gospel, the gospel He preached, the gospel God sent by Him, which is the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. The Gospel of God is God's gospel, His message, His good news, which He sent by His messenger Yahshua. The gospel that Yahshua the Messiah proclaimed is the gospel He brought from God (Lk 16:16). Yahshua said, "The word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me." The Law and the Prophets were until John, but since that time the Kingdom of God is preached in order to usher in the Kingdom by bringing this age to its close (Mt 21:43; 24:14). That is the thrust of the Kingdom message.

To follow Yahshua (Mk 10:21) takes one who is in preparation to be worthy of the Kingdom (Rev 3:4,21). Verse 21 speaks of the Kingdom, and one who is found worthy maintains very close fellowship with Yahshua on his journey to the Kingdom, to be taught and disciplined by Him (Rev 3:19-22). Even as Jn 6:63-69, all His disciples who continue to follow Him believe who He is that they are following, for they are being trained to rule with Him in the coming Kingdom. A person is not saved or given eternal life just to go to heaven when he dies, but the requirements of the gospel train him (and would have trained the rich young ruler) to be able to rule in the coming Kingdom.

A person is not saved out of the world, as the gospel demands, just to have eternal life, but to walk with our Master and be trained up to be worthy and comparable to Him (Rev 3:4), which takes constant overcoming (Heb 10:13). Jn 14:21 — A worthy disciple who follows Him must have continual enlightenment, revelation. Yahshua must continually be able to disclose Himself to him, as he walks in the light of His words, keeping His commandments.

The gospel of the Kingdom of God begins and ends with obedience, but the rich young ruler was more concerned with keeping his own life than obeying Yahshua's commandment of what it would take to follow Him. He had bent his knee, but not his will; bowed his head, but not his heart; wanted heavenly possessions, but was not

willing to give up earthly possessions. He knew what he needed, but did not forsake what he wanted. Yahshua asked him to sacrifice the present for the future, but he did the opposite. He was being called to be an apostle, but he chose instead to be a miser.

In Mk 10:21 we see our Master intently looking — a searching look into the man's soul, a look of human sympathy, but with divine penetration, weighing the inner thoughts and motives. The sincerity of the man was beyond question. We love him ourselves. He had the same look you had on your face, Mark, with your head down. And according to the Word our Master could only find one thing left that was hindering the young man, just as you, Mark. Think of it — just one thing! The Master knew what was in the heart of man. But this man was eager, humble, with unashamed courage in front of the scribes and Pharisees in broad daylight, having discernment of who Yahshua was, calling Him *Master*. He asked honest questions. “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” His answers were good according to his light.

We would have expected the rich young ruler to have answered Yahshua differently in verse 22, “Certainly, Master, I will do this at once, just as you say.” But no, there is a sudden change. The ready tongue became dumb; the bright-eyed gaze became dull and dropped to the ground; the bended knee rises slowly with a downcast head. He slowly walks away sad, because he had great possessions. In verse 17 he was eager, reverent, courageous, discerning, spiritually disposed, morally upright, well-meaning, highly religious. Yet, his heart was not right with God, and his soul was not saved, which can only come by obeying the words of life from God (Rom 10:17). There is no other way.

What a strange climax. The rich young ruler came running, but his ardent inquiry and high aspirations become strangled by a secret but sudden exposure: slavery to Mammon. He was sad, grieved at the saying, “Sell all,” cut to the quick by the word of Yahshua, the Son of the living God.

So Mark, like the rich young ruler, you may be anxious about your salvation. You may be reverent toward God, unashamed you're a Christian, spiritually inclined or disposed, morally upright, well-meaning, and a good Christian, just as the rich young ruler in his religion. But unless you renounce all you have, all your comfort now, our Master's word to you is Lk 6:24 — for the rest of eternity, just as the rich young ruler will have no comfort. And as for your comparing your comfort with eternal life — you must put your absolute trust in obedience to His word.

So Mark, whom we love, we would have expected you to respond as we would have expected the rich young ruler to respond. Never would we have thought he or you would give up what you needed most for something you wanted more. But you sadly walked away from our Master in us (Jn 13:20; Lk 10:16).

We know, Mark, that you did not put your hand to the plow (Lk 9:62), but we still have hope. We still love you and we cry for you. Please don't throw eternal life away. For in the same thrust you are throwing Yahshua away as well, who took upon Himself all of our sins and was tortured in that place on our behalf (Lk 16:28; Acts 2:24; 2 Cor 5:15,21).

So do not any longer live for yourself. Stop it, please, and live only for the One who died for you so that you would not be a useless, worthless person, living for yourself like the rest of the world out there. Jn 12:25-26 — He is here. Come back to Him! Do not be like Lk 6:24-26.

Please consider our Master's words in Mk 10:22-27. So many Christians today, as the Jews in our Master's day, are in the same condition (including you) called blindness — not seeing their own wretched condition or desperate wickedness for having rejected the good news (Jn 3:36). Those in Rev 21:6-8 who don't overcome to drink the water of life are the cowardly and unbelieving. As Mk 10:24 says, how hard it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom — easier for a camel (verse 25), which is an impossibility. So, verse 26 follows: Who then can be saved?

The Savior can liberate all who will obey Him, as Peter said, and our Master responded with the final note (verses 29-30) — and this is the answer to the question in verse 17. So consider these things (2 Tim 2:3-7).

We sent you the *Civilian Affairs* paper we handed out at the Billy Graham Crusade. Lk 6:26 — “Blessed are you when all men speak well of you.” Blessed are Martin Luther, and John Calvin, and “Saint” Augustine, and blessed are the rich. God has blessed them so much, and blessed are those who desire to be rich and go to college to accomplish their own desires and please their parents who send them there.

Jn 12:25-26 — You’d better not be where He isn’t, for only where He is, only there can one serve Him. What does it mean to hate your life in this world? So is there one thing you still lack, Mark? Maybe it is total surrender. Lk 14:31-32 is capitulation, as verse 33. It costs everything — Lk 5:11; 14:33; 18:28-29 — even a wife, as also in Mt 19:27-29 and Mk 10:29.

The One we know (not the one you know, 2 Cor 11:4,15) is worthy to lavish all upon, or we do not regard Him worthy at all. Mk 10:30 speaks of this present age, a hundred times over, and in the age to come, Eternal Life. Verse 30 answers the quest of the rich young ruler in verse 17. How could he or anyone follow our Master with all his own possessions? To follow Him is to be His disciple, and to be His disciple is to have eternal life. Eternal life is eternal life — no one can have eternal life as our Master was giving the directions to except by obeying the director.

Eternal life is not just “going to heaven,” but before one can enter into the Kingdom of God one must make preparation for entering, and no one can make preparation without obeying His commandments, and no one can obey His commandments without having the Holy Spirit, and no one can have the Holy Spirit without being given the gift of eternal life. The Holy Spirit is eternal life, and whoever has the Son has the life of the Son in him, and this is love. The Divine Spirit is love, for God is love, and no one can love as the Master commanded without His love motivating

the direction of his will. Rom 5:5 is given in baptism (1 Cor 12:12-13). So our Master would never expect anyone to love as He loved without the love that possessed Him being in them (Jn 13:34). Jn 13:35 proves who has eternal life now, and it will be all too clear in the next age — either death or life.

1 Jn 3:1-3 is first of all — we are *now* sons of God, but only sons of God are proven, tested in this present age, to be made fit for the Kingdom, to rule with the Master. Rev 3:21 is the next age.

So, to make everything perfectly clear, our good news is our Master's good news, and His good news is God's good news — the gospel which originated with Him (Mk 1:14), which proclaims one's preparation for entering the Kingdom of God. And this preparation cannot take place after one gets there, or one will not get there. The only place this preparation can take place is *where He is* (Jn 12:26), and the only way one can get *there* is to hate his life in this world (Jn 12:25), for the one who loves his life will lose it.

So if anyone wants to follow Him, Mk 10:21 tells him what he must do to do it. To be a disciple is a life-long training experience in the University of Yahshua — *where He is*. So where is He and where is His servant? Where do we keep His commandments (Jn 14:21)? In the same place where He can reveal Himself to us, and we cannot keep His commandments anywhere else on earth besides where He is, nor serve Him.

Obedying His commandments proves who are His disciples and who are not — only to them can He disclose Himself, for they are “the only ones,” as our Master told His first disciples before He left. “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.” Jn 14:18, as verse 17 explains, and Jn 14:2-3 is where He is today — in His Body on earth — that where He is, His servant will be also (Jn 12:26). But before you can get there, verse 25 is the way and the truth and the new life (Jn 14:1-6,18-23).

And Mark, is verse 24 speaking of you?

Jn 14:26-28 — Verse 28 is Jn 12:26 and Jn 14:18 and Jn 14:2-3 — a *place* (1 Tim 2:8; 1 Cor 1:2; Mal 1:11). A *place* is a locality where the witness of the Kingdom to come (Mt 24:14; 21:43) is bearing its fruit for the next age as Lk 1:78-79; 2:32; Isa 42:6-7; 49:6 — the dawning of the age of the Kingdom of God upon the earth, the dawning of the light from on high (Mal 4:2). This is prophesied. As Lk 1:78 says, it will dawn on us, upon us, to shine upon and give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to direct and guide our feet in a straight line into the way of peace (Isa 9:2).

Mark, this is why we are reaching out to you. You have not known the way of peace (Jn 14:27), for only in Him can you or anyone have the true and lasting peace (Jn 16:33). So I want to leave you with one more verse to consider, in hopes that you will not find yourself described by it:

He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. (1 Jn 2:4)