

Rich Young Ruler

(Mark 10:17-27)

Introduction

If you had lots of money and could get anything you wanted, what would you buy? Can you think of something that you could never buy, even if you had all the money in the world? What are some gifts God gives to people who trust him? (Help to do what's right, courage, peace, love, forgiveness.) How much money does it take to buy love or forgiveness? Why might someone think that money is the most valuable thing to have? Why is the gift of forgiveness more important than money?

The Bible tells of a young man who had lots of money and owned many things, but he wanted something that all his money couldn't buy.

Opening Prayer

Father, we come before You this morning, expecting to learn. I pray that none of us will leave this room without coming into a deeper understanding of Your ways, dear Lord. Help us to hear Your voice with the ears of our hearts. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. (James 2:10)

Lesson

In the later part of Jesus' ministry, he went out into the region of Perea, east of Jericho, on the other side of the Jordan River. [Teacher, point this out on the map.]

One day a young man ran to Jesus and knelt before Him and asked a very important question.

Mark 10:17

As Jesus was starting out on his way to Jerusalem, a man came running up to him, knelt down, and asked, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Because this young man ran to get to Jesus and knelt before Him without shame, we know this young man had an earnest desire to learn. But note that he thought he had to do some "good" works (good deeds) to receive eternal life.

Instead of answering his question, Jesus asked the young man why he called Him "good" since only God Himself is good.

Mark 10:18

"Why do you call me good?" Jesus asked. "Only God is truly good.

The term *good* refers to perfection. Jesus was reacting to being called "*perfect*" by someone who had no awareness of His divine nature. Jesus was testing this man; He knew that the man had no idea Who he was speaking to—the creator of the universe!

Mark 10:19

But to answer your question, you know the commandments: 'You must not murder. You must not commit adultery. You must not steal. You must not testify falsely. You must not cheat anyone. Honor your father and mother.'"

Jesus reviewed the commandments for the young man. He listed the laws given by God to Moses regarding our relationships with others.

Mark 10:20

"Teacher," the man replied, "I've obeyed all these commandments since I was young."

The young man said he had kept all these commands. This fellow was probably a good person who tried to keep all of God's commandments. Yet he still sensed that something was missing.

The truth is that no one, except the perfect Lord Jesus, ever kept all of God's commandments.

God gave us His commandments to show us how sinful we are. Sin is breaking God's rules, and all of us do that. [Teacher, ask the children to give examples of commandments they sometimes break.] No one had to teach you to do wrong things. You were born wanting to do things your own way.

The Bible says the punishment for your sin is to be separated from God forever. Even the few commandments you might be able to keep are not enough to earn you eternal life with God (James 2:10, *For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all*). He says that the very best things that you do are worthless because of the sinfulness inside you (Isaiah 64:6, *All our righteousness are like filthy rags*.) The young man talking to Jesus had worked hard at trying to keep God's commandments. Yet even he knew it just wasn't enough. Jesus wanted him to face that. But instead of admitting he had sinned, he wanted Jesus to give him something else he could do to earn eternal life.

Mark 10:21

Looking at the man, Jesus felt genuine love for him. "There is still one thing you haven't done," he told him. "Go and sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

Jesus saw that this young man was sincere, but that he was also trying to get to God his own way. Even though Jesus knew all about the sinfulness in the young man's heart, He still loved him. Jesus, God the Son, knows all about you, too. He knows about the sinfulness born in your heart, but still He loves you. Imagine that the One who created all things, the holy God Himself, knows and loves you! You are precious to Him (Psalm 139:17, *How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them!*) Because He loves you, the Lord wants you to spend all eternity with Him. But believing on Jesus is the only way to receive eternal life. How Jesus longed for this young man to believe on Him!

Jesus had told this young man to sell everything and give the money to the poor, and follow Him. The man couldn't bring himself to do it.

Mark 10:22

At this the man's face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions.

Jesus was trying to show this rich man that his love for money made him a sinner – he was not obeying God's commandments after all. Which commandment wasn't he keeping? [Teacher, let the children look at the poster of the 10 Commandments and tell which one they think it was: "*Do not covet*"; also, "*Do not have any idols*." The man obviously idolized his money.]

The young man was depending on his wealth, not on God's provision. So he showed that he lacked real faith in God. Unwilling to give up his great riches, the young man would not admit his sin; he sadly walked away from Jesus.

Jesus then turned to his disciples...

Mark 10:23

Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the Kingdom of God!"

Jesus tells his disciples that it's hard for people who trust in riches to realize their need for God. Most people of Jesus' day thought that earthy riches were a sign of God's blessing on their lives. Jesus wanted to show His disciples that wealth could actually be a stumbling block to getting God's blessings.

Mark 10:24-25

This amazed them. But Jesus said again, "Dear children, it is very hard to enter the Kingdom of God. (25) In fact, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God!"

Jesus used a word picture to illustrate His point. [Teacher, show the children a needle and thread.]

The rich young man was seeking eternal life through all of the good things he was doing. But deep in his heart, he valued his riches more than his relationship with God. It wasn't that having riches is wrong. But his riches had blinded him to his real need: he had to admit he was a sinner before he could have eternal life. Eternal life does not depend on what a person does, but rather on his willingness to believe God.

Not long after this discussion, Jesus died on a cross, giving His life's blood as payment for sin. Since He was the perfect, sinless Son of God, He was not paying for His own sin, but for yours and mine. The Lord Jesus willingly suffered and died so that you and I would never have to pay for our own sin.

Admitting your sin and believing on Jesus is the only way you can receive eternal life. Don't fool yourself into thinking that you can get to heaven by doing good works. The rich young man wanted eternal life, but he allowed the importance of his riches to keep him from admitting his need. He kept trying to earn eternal life through his good works. Jesus explained that the young man's efforts would do him no good.

Mark 10:26

The disciples were astounded. "Then who in the world can be saved?" they asked.

The disciples were amazed to think that wealth wasn't a sign of God's special blessing on a person. They were thinking, "*If a rich man can't get to heaven, who can?*"

Mark 10:27

Jesus looked at them intently and said, "Humanly speaking, it is impossible. But not with God. Everything is possible with God."

Jesus was telling the disciples that no one can earn eternal life by his good deeds; each of us must admit our sinfulness and turn to Jesus for salvation. Jesus is the only One who has the power to forgive your sins and give you eternal life.

If you know that you have sinned and you believe that the Lord Jesus died on the cross to pay for your sins, you can know that you have eternal life today. (1John 5:13 says, *These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.*)

Closing Prayer

Thank you, Jesus that we can have confidence in what You did for us on the cross. You paid for our sins completely! And You proved that You are God by rising again from the dead and ascending into heaven where you are right now. We look forward to seeing You face-to-face one day soon. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

Game Center

Choose one of the following game ideas:

It's not always easy to find your way to heaven:

Line up four adult-sized folding chairs side-by-side with the seats all facing the same direction. This will create a tunnel, which represents the eye of the needle, between the legs of the chairs.

Have children line up and take turns crawling through the eye of the needle. They'll probably end up on their bellies, wiggling through the chairs. Make sure the second child doesn't start through the tunnel until the first child is all the way through. If you have more than eight children, set up two tunnels for them to crawl through.

For extra fun, turn this game into a relay race. Make two tunnels, and have children form two teams. The winning team is the first one

whose members have all crawled through the eye of the needle. If you have too small a class for two teams, time the children individually. The child with the best time wins.

Bean Bag Toss Game:

Cut shapes out of a box and label them “Who,” “What,” “When,” “Where,” and “Why.” Set box with cut-out shapes on top, 3 to 5 feet from throw line. Give each child two tries to get the bean bag through a shape. The child draws a question written on a corresponding shape. If the child does not know the answer, he or she may ask another child for help.

Use the following questions:

1. Who asked Jesus a question? (Vr. 17 a rich young ruler.)
2. Who did Jesus say is “good”? (Vr. 18) only God.)
3. Who did Jesus tell the rich, young ruler to give to? (Vr. 21 to the poor.)
4. What did the ruler ask Jesus? (Vr. 17 what must I do to inherit eternal life?)
5. What did Jesus ask the rich, young ruler to sell? (Vr. 21 all your possessions.)
6. What did Jesus say was easier for a camel to go through? (Vr 25 eye of a needle.)
7. When did the rich, young ruler keep all the commandments? (Vr. 20 since he was young.)
8. When did Jesus say the rich, young ruler would have treasure in heaven? (Vr. 21 when he sold all his possessions and gave all the money to the poor.)

9. When did the ruler become very sad? (Vr. 22 when Jesus told him to give all his money to the poor.)
10. Where do you find the commandments Jesus quoted in Vr. 19? (In the Bible, in Exodus 20.)
11. Where did Jesus say the rich, young ruler would have treasure? (Vr. 21 in heaven.)
12. Where is it hard for a rich man to enter? (Vr. 25 kingdom of God.)
13. Why did the rich, young ruler ask Jesus a question? (Vr. 17 he wanted to know how to get eternal life.)
14. Why did the rich, young ruler become very sad when Jesus told him to sell everything? (Vr. 22 he had many possessions.)
15. Why do you think Jesus said it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God? (Because you are depending on your material wealth instead of God.)

Or, use the following review questions in a game of your choice:

1. One day a young man ran to Jesus, knelt before Him and asked him a question. What was that question? (“*What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?*”)
2. How did this young man think a person got to heaven? (By doing good works, like keeping the commandments.)
3. Had the rich young man kept all of God’s commandments perfectly? Which one had the man not kept? (“*Do not covet*” and also, “*Do not have any idols.*” The man obviously idolized his money.)
4. What is the only way to receive eternal life? (By believing on what Jesus did for us all on the cross.)

5. What did Jesus tell this young man to do? (“*Sell whatever you have and give to the poor.*”)
6. What did Jesus mean by telling the rich young man to sell everything and give all the money away to the poor? (To get rid of his love of money and his trust in riches because it was blocking his receipt of all that God has for him.)
7. Does Jesus expect you or your parents to sell everything and give all the money away to the poor? (No, but He wants us to be willing to do anything God asked, even that.)
8. Why do you think it’s hard for rich people to get into heaven? (They depend on their money and not on God’s provision.)
9. Is it wrong to have money? Why or why not? (No, it’s not wrong to have money; it’s wrong to depend on your money.)
10. Why do you think Jesus used the image of a camel going through the eye of a needle to illustrate his point? (Because it’s nearly impossible for someone who is banking on his riches to receive eternal life from God.)
11. What other kinds of things could make it hard for us to reach heaven? (Good looks, power, prestige, connections, knowledge, possessions...)
12. What is the most important thing in life? (Our relationship with Jesus.)

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