

The Rich Young Ruler pt. 2

Matthew 19:23 - 20:16

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In this section of our study, we pick up with Jesus' conversation with the rich young ruler, where the Messiah makes it clear that the way the world views status, is exactly opposite of the way of the Kingdom. The truth Jesus would have us learn is this.

Those who willingly give up the pursuit of power and possessions for the sake of the kingdom, will not only have great joy and purpose in this life, but will be rewarded with power, authority, and possessions in His coming kingdom.

A Warning about Wealth (19:23-26)

This rich young ruler went away sorrowful, not simply because he had great wealth, but because that wealth proved too great for him to give up. Unlike the other disciples, this man was not willing to give up his material possessions in order to follow Jesus. Wealth and all that came with it had a stranglehold on his spiritual life, and even the promises of Jesus, that he would be "perfect" (complete) and he would have the "eternal life" and "treasure in heaven", were not enough to convince him to abandon his wealth. This man had great power and possessions, and though he was sincere in his desire to honor God, his desire was overcome by his idolatry. He was one of the many who seek to enter the kingdom life but are unable to because their desire for life is choked out by "the deceitfulness of riches". (Luke 13:24 / Matthew 13:22)

This exchange gave Jesus the perfect opportunity to teach his disciples about the dangers of wealth. His statement about the camel through the eye of the needle should not be overlooked. Jesus used an extreme picture, to give a severe warning that shocked his disciples. Their shock seemingly stemmed from a common misunderstanding found in their culture. Namely, that wealth and power were indicators of God's favor. Jesus' statement turned this assumption on its head. The truth is, the wealthy and powerful have a unique temptation that seeks to keep them enslaved to the carnal life. However, Jesus also revealed a more powerful truth is at work; that God is able to set free those who pursue power and possessions and enable them to heed His calls toward kingdom action.

A Promise and a Principle (19:27-30)

Here Peter jumps in recognizing that he and the rest of the disciples have done precisely what Jesus asked this man to do, and he wants to know what their reward will be. Jesus doesn't scold him as we might expect, but rather gives them a clear promise as to what they will receive, and not just the 12, but all who follow their example in self-sacrifice. A day is coming when Jesus will sit upon His throne, and the 12 disciples will sit on 12 thrones reigning and ruling over Israel with Him in His coming messianic kingdom. For those who following Jesus costs them their possessions and/or relationships, they will be rewarded 100 fold, and they will possess the kingdom life now and in the age to come! This promise from our Messiah is to be cherished and used in our lives to set us free as well!

Following on the heels of these promises, Jesus teaches his disciples a kingdom principle, “many who are first will be last, and the last first”. The point here is clear, the way this new kingdom works, is not at all like the kingdom of the world. Those who the world (including many followers of Christ) considered to be “first” (significant, honored), will actually be “last” (insignificant, humbled).

The Principle in a Parable (20:1-16)

Jesus uses the matching phrase in 19:30 & 20:16 to bookend a parable that illustrates this kingdom principle. The new kingdom does not work like the kingdom of the world. Those who had worked the longest and the hardest expect to be paid first and be paid more, regardless of the original deal. However, in Jesus’ story, it is those who had the easiest and shortest workday who are paid first and equal to the others. It is easy to get wrapped up in the many details in this parable (I am definitely guilty of it) but I think the point of the parable is simply this: God’s kingdom is the opposite of the kingdom of this world. The last will be first, and the first will be last.

A few questions come to the surface in this study. And I would invite you to join me in seeking to prayerfully and honestly answer them...

Am I free from the pursuit of power and possessions, and seeking first the kingdom?

Are my disciples learning the importance of seeking first the kingdom rather than power and possessions?

Grace Family Needs, News and Notes

GCC Youth Kick-off: Sept. 5th @ 10 am / Parents Meeting at 11 am

Conquer Series- The battle for Purity: Sept. 9th 7-9PM in Modular.

For more information email: Scott Plunkett @ splunkett3@cox.net

Trail Life USA BBQ & Open House: Sept 17th @ 5:30 here at Grace.

For more information email: TrailLife@gccramona.com

Parents Round table: Sept. 17th 7-8pm in Modular

Dessert fellowship of parents with members of staff. This will be a chance to talk about raising children and explore ways Grace Church can better support you as parents. Childcare provided.

For more information: Paul Nelson – paul@gccramona.com